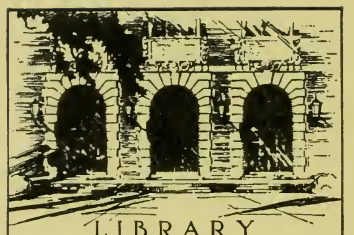

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TWO KISSES.

BY

HAWLEY SMART,

AUTHOR OF "BREEZIE LANGTON," "FALSE CARDS."

&c., &c.

"Methinks no wrong it were, if I should steal
From those two melting rubies one poor kiss."

IN THREE VOLUMES.

VOL. II.

LONDON: RICHARD BENTLEY & SON,
NEW BURLINGTON STREET.
1875.
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TWO KISSES.

CHAPTER I.

ON A BICYCLE.

IT took Roseneath House almost a week to settle down after that momentous event—the ball. When your lot is cast where the stream runs strong, and you are perpetually battling with the waters, you can form no conception how little will create a turmoil in the still pools of existence. As Aunt Clem said, "after the last wreath, the last sconce had been removed from the walls,

the house still savoured of dissipation." The maids too seemed bitten with the "Valse de Fascination," and hummed it over their daily labours in a manner that scandalized a domestic martinet like Miss Matilda grossly. The knocker also seemed "always on the rap;" as the same lady remarked, "What with people fetching away things I had no idea we had ever borrowed, and receiving calls and cards from people I never heard of before, a nap before dinner has become a luxury of the past."

But these cards and visits were a source of considerable amusement and speculation to Bessie and Aunt Clem. That close upon the moiety of the guests should be strangers to their hostess is not remarkable at a first dance in London. As Bessie had said, they would have been sore put to it to find dancing men, aye, and even dancing women without extraneous assistance. It was the puzzling out who was who, that afforded such fun to Bessie and Aunt Clem.

They were very curious to see that handsome Mrs. Paynter again, though how she had come to be of their gathering, they had no conception, but in that they were doomed to disappointment. Mrs. Paynter left cards without asking to be let in. Very problematical indeed, whether her carriage contained Mrs. Paynter upon that occasion. Captain Detfield, too, had called and stopped for five o'clock tea, and both ladies were highly interested in his visit. He had danced with both of them, and his easy light-hearted talk had made a favourable impression. Moreover a guardsman is a *rara avis* in Islington circles, and Bessie's immediate intimates had manifested much curiosity concerning him both at the ball and since. That young lady was by no means insensible to the *éclat* attending such an acquaintance, and disposed to keep it up should opportunity be forthcoming.

It must not be supposed that Bessie had conceived any particular admiration for Det-

field. She was very young, and her knowledge of men and the world, so far, very limited, but she did perceive that Detfield was of a different class from those she had at present met. His quiet, easy, polished manner contrasted considerably with that of the few young men she knew. The self-contained bearing, the habitual repose of one who mixes in good society invariably displays a striking dissimilarity to those who, immersed in the business of life, have not such opportunities. Women note these things keenly, especially do they regard the carriage of those whom they believe to mingle in circles above their own. That is why Mrs. Paynter and Detfield were objects of interest to Bessie and Aunt Clem. As for Miss Matilda, she had taken no recognition of them. The giving of a ball had absorbed all her faculties. That the ball had been a success had swallowed up all minor details concerning it. That the consequences of the ball seemed never ending, as regarded

callers and the humming of the "Valse de Fascination" by her maids, had produced a bilious irritability of temperament in Miss Matilda, which imparted a crispness to life at Roseneath House not altogether pleasant to the dwellers beneath its roof.

Miss Matilda declared vehemently she would never hear of such a thing taking place again. That she was a foolish old woman to have ever allowed herself to be cajoled—very fond of this word just now is Miss Matilda—into such nonsense by a chit of a child just loose from a boarding-school, backed up, too, by one who ought to have known better. And here Miss Matilda would glance reproachfully at her sister. Still when the knocker had been moderately quiet, and Miss Matilda had leisure to read peacefully, as she expressed it, which meant indulge in her usual afternoon nap—then over a cup of tea the good lady would laugh and chat with her niece and Aunt Clem and revel in recapitulating the triumphs

of the evening, till an arch demand from Bessie as to when the next was to take place, would once more remind her that she set her face against all such nonsense for the future.

But the ball had produced one result which had been barely foreseen by the ladies of Roseneath House. It had shown to the neighbourhood, and also to people somewhat beyond the immediate neighbourhood, that the Misses Stanbury entertained and that very handsomely—also that there was a young Miss Stanbury who was a very pretty girl, and further it was whispered about that Miss Bessie Stanbury was a young lady with gold galore and cash in the bank—an heiress in short—though from whom or how she inherited her riches was not quite so clear. But still two ladies who gave balls—Miss Matilda's determination luckily not being made known to the public—and who had a pretty niece with a fortune were decidedly worth cultivating.

The Misses Stanbury found themselves suddenly inundated with invitations. Bessie, under the chaperonage of Aunt Clem, took to going out a good deal. Miss Matilda pronouncing them a couple of fools, stayed at home with her book for the most part, but shewed considerable interest in the history of their proceedings the next morning all the same.

Bessie speculated at times as to whether she should come across Detfield on these occasions. It was very natural; no more than a girl wondering whether she shall meet a favourite partner, and girls are accustomed to indulge in such reflections without their feelings being at all interested. We all muse a little upon whom we are likely to meet when we contemplate going into society, and calculate whom it may be our lot to be paired off with at dinner now and again, with no little anxiety. You may do pretty well what you like in a ball-room, but at a dinner-party you are the

slave of your hostess. It is in her power to make the next two hours those of pleasure or boredom, no manœuvring on your part can avert her decree. If rank has its advantages it certainly also has its drawbacks, and there are occasions when the possession of a coronet is fraught with inconvenience to the wearer. Bessie, for instance, would be a pleasanter companion than deaf old Lady Slowborough, but *noblesse oblige*, and young Lord Martello, however he may deprecate the arrangement, finds himself compelled by the laws of society to take charge of that venerable and by no means amusing old peeress under such circumstances.

Still Bessie troubles her head very little about Captain Detfield. She had thought him nice, that he valsed to perfection, that he was amusing. She would rather have liked to come across him again. Not at all insensible was Bessie to the distinction of having such a cavalier in her train, but she had

built up no romance concerning him, as girls sometimes do about a man they have met in this way. Bessie took the world as it came, and enjoyed herself as one only does at eighteen.

Cantering briskly home from a long scamper over Hampstead Heath one February afternoon, Velvet gives a tremendous start, rather shaking her young mistress, quite unprepared for such a misdemeanour on the part of her favourite, in the saddle. As Bessie recovers herself, she looks round to see what has frightened her mare. The light is failing rapidly, but she speedily makes out a man seated by the road-side with a machine of some kind by his side; almost as she catches sight of him he springs to his feet, and slightly raising his hat, regrets to have been the involuntary cause of her horse's misbehaviour.

"Can he be of any use?" and as he asks the question he pats the mare's neck, and leads her back into the centre of the road again. "You were fortunately too

good a horse-woman to take any harm from the shy, and no doubt your mare has recovered her manners by this, and is as ashamed of herself as I am," said the stranger, once more raising his hat.

"Yes;" replied Bessie, with a light laugh, "I don't doubt she is, but she has an excuse. Captain Detfield seated by the road-side, apparently in company with a knife-grinder's barrow, would have startled me as much as it did Velvet, had I seen it without some little preparation."

"Miss Stanbury!" exclaimed the guardsman; "the light must be my excuse for not recognising you in the first instance. I am really shocked to think that I should have affrighted you and Velvet; but on my word," he continued, laughing, "you owe me some *amende* too. Fancy calling my new hack a knife-grinder's barrow?"

"Well, what is it you have got there with you?"

"Mind, I swear you to secrecy, Miss

Stanbury; but I am giving my whole mind up to economy this winter. I have awoke suddenly to the fact that a horse may be defined as an animal that always eats and is always lame—such is my experience of that perverse quadruped of late. That barrow, Miss Stanbury, is my bicycle, a hack, I am assured, when I have once learnt to ride it, that can go faster and go farther than any horse ever foaled—that is never lame, never hungry, but which, to wind up with, makes you think to be across the worst you ever rode would be elysium compared to it."

"But you are not going to leave your —hack—bicycle, what am I to call it, there, are you?" said the young lady merrily.

"No; now I am rested a little, we are about to recommence our doleful progress. If you can reconcile Velvet to my company, I shall be proud to be your escort into town."

"We will try. Velvet has of course a

proper contempt for all machinery; but I don't think she will object to your new steed, when she thoroughly sees what it is. We often encounter them."

"Bravo, Miss Stanbury!" replied Detfield. "Now," he continued, jumping on his bicycle, "we will push along, nominally because it is getting late, but in reality because this affair usually upsets when I try to go slow on it." Detfield had attained very fair proficiency, and kept alongside Velvet's easy canter without difficulty. That high-bred quadruped, after a disdainful snort or two, making no objection to the arrangement. "It is a good while since we met, Miss Stanbury," observed the guardsman; "but I'm afraid we have few mutual acquaintances."

"Yes, that is likely," rejoined Bessie. "London is very big, and my acquaintance not very extensive. You see I have not been what is called out very long, and though I've been to a good many parties

this winter, I suppose our paths lie wide apart."

"I don't know about that," replied Charlie, somewhat mendaciously, "it is marvellous how people run across each other in London."

"Then I suppose, Captain Detfield, the fates have been against it in our case?"

"It would seem so. Fortune has treated me scurvily of late in many things. I hope she will behave better in future," and here Charlie bethought him what an inconvenient thing a bicycle was from which to sustain a conversation with a lady.

They were now nearing Liverpool Road, and had arrived at the tramway that enters the suburb on the North. Round the turn in the road came the gleaming lights of the cars. Calling to his companion to pull to one side, Detfield turned his bicycle to the other, but the big wheel caught in the iron grooves of the tram, and with a heavy crash Charlie came to the ground.

Though a little shook, he had sense enough left to roll clear. Another second, and the heavy car smashed his overturned bicycle to shivers. With a passing malediction the driver pursued the ever tenour of his way, and covered with mud, Detfield sprang to his feet.

Bessie, passing the car upon the opposite side, saw nothing of this accident. She looked round when she cleared it, and missing her companion at once reined up her mare. It was getting dark now, and she could see nothing of him. She sat still and waited. The bicycle, needless to say, did not appear. Then Bessie turned her horse and walked it slowly along the road. Before she had gone a hundred yards, she met Detfield.

"What is the matter?" she exclaimed, "and where is this economical hack that is to wear down poor Velvet?"

"Dead!" replied Charlie, laughing, "he's been run over and killed by the street

cars. No commiseration, Miss Stanbury, you can't think how glad I am he's gone. It's such a comfort to find *the thing* as liable to accident as horseflesh. You're witness I've tried economy, and that it turned out a failure. I shall sue the company for damages next week, and buy a hack with the proceeds."

"But you are covered with mud!" cried Bessie, as a street-lamp revealed the state of Detfield's dress. "Are you sure you are not hurt?"

"Not a bit, except in regard to my vanity. I know I'm not looking my best before a lady, and that is always painful to bear."

"Nonsense!" returned Bessie, "but here is my groom. What can he do for you?"

"Let him ride on and get me a cab, and allow me to walk alongside you to your own door. It's no distance now"—

"And your bicycle?"

"Let its bones lie where it fell. I am

well rid of it. Velvet was right in her convictions—they are things to be fought shy of."

Bessie laughed, as she gave her henchman his orders, and walked her mare slowly homewards, while Detfield strode by her side.

"It is well it is dark, Miss Stanbury, or I should compromise you fearfully. The neighbourhood would say that you came home accompanied by a crossing-sweeper."

"I don't care much what the neighbourhood think," replied Miss Bessie proudly.

"Oh, please don't say so," rejoined Charlie earnestly. "No woman, and especially a young one, can ever afford to say that. Ten thousand pardons, Miss Stanbury, I have no business to preach. I apologize, but I know the world better than you."

"You fancy then that I ought not to be seen coming home with you in this way," said Bessie, somewhat bitterly.

"No, don't mistake me. I was only jesting at my own disreputable appearance, but you spoke so boldly about defying your neighbours—excuse me, I was wrong, I always am, taking to a bicycle for example. Pray forget and forgive my unfortunate remark."

A guardsman of twenty-six preaching sermons to a girl of eighteen! the thing was an anomaly.

They walked on in silence. Detfield striding steadily along by Velvet's side, wondered what could have possessed him to begin moralizing. But his reflections were speedily brought to a close by their arrival at the Misses Stanbury's door, where Bessie's groom and a cab were awaiting them. Charlie lifted his fair companion from her saddle, declined coming in on the plea of his bespattered habiliments, and expressing a hope that he might have the good fortune to meet Miss Bessie again ere long, took his departure.

Bessie amused her aunts at dinner with a laughing account of the guardsman's misadventure, but more than once that evening she knit her brows, and the colour in her cheek deepened as she thought of Detfield's remark. It angered and annoyed her. She deemed that he had misunderstood her—that he had taken her half jesting, half petulant little speech seriously. A frank, free, unaffected English girl, Bessie had no desire to be included in the category of "fast young ladies," neither was she given to such habitual contempt of the *convenances* as her retort would imply. The young lady felt a little indignant that Detfield should have taken her so literally. She did not want him, or for the matter of that anyone, as she remarked to herself, to think of her in that way. She had done herself an injustice, and she knew it. She certainly did not merit to be regarded in that light. Why had he taken up her foolish speech so quickly? Then she wondered what had

surprised him into speaking so earnestly. It had been but a few words, apologized for as soon as uttered, brief as a ripple on the water; and yet Bessie thought she had caught a glimpse, in those half dozen seconds, of a chivalrous manhood, under the guardsman's usual light nonchalant manner, such as she would fain know more of.

CHAPTER II.

THE MAJOR'S MEDITATIONS.

THINKING that you have game in your hand, and playing your cards boldly, it is rather a shock to find that you have miscalculated trumps. Deeming that you have considerably the best of your neighbour, and suddenly awaking to the fact that it is he, on the contrary, who is in a position to dictate terms to you, is also apt to disturb the equanimity of practitioners like Major Jenkens. Men who live by the weaknesses of their fellows, are wont to be much put out, on finding themselves in

contact with a bird of prey stronger in the wing than themselves. The Major cannot get over Mr. Roxby's curt decisive ultimatum. It is all very well to say that he will be amply recompensed for his share in the arrangement of Miss Stanbury's marriage, but the Major had fully intended to be a partner in such spoil as might accrue from the successful negotiation of that affair; evident now that Mr. Roxby will have nothing to say to him concerning it, unless he enacts the rôle of a subordinate. This is precisely what the Major specially objects to do.

It is a blow to his *amour propre*. He is not particular, as we know. He will stick at little that does not place him within the clutches of the law; but he does like to pull the strings himself. He chafes at being a mere puppet in the hands of another. He knows Roxby well, he knows that eminent city financier to be as bold as unscrupulous. Twice has he had transactions

with him, and upon each occasion, clever as the Major was, he had found himself thoroughly outwitted, and a mere tool at last in the hands of his crafty and audacious coadjutor. This had irritated the Major much, and he had vowed that the day should come when it should be he that would dictate how affairs should be carried out to Roxby. When that gentleman wrote him that little note to John Street, Major Jenkens conceived his day was come, but the ball in Barnsbury Park had rather dissipated that opinion.

Major Jenkens occupied chambers in a first floor in Charles Street, Berkley Square, plainly but handsomely furnished rooms, and pervaded by their occupant's love of order. From the trim writing-table to the dwarf book-case, from the lounging-chair to the comfortable sofa, everything was arranged with almost mathematical precision. You saw no volumes upside down, or a second volume in place of a third in that

book case, no answered letters, or loose note paper were scattered about that table. Long experience had taught the Major the precise angle at which that lounging-chair got most benefit of the fire, and least possible draught from the window—where the sofa and the other furniture figured to the greatest advantage. Having made up his mind on these points, he permitted no shifting of his movables from the places assigned to them.

"The furniture, Sir," in these rooms, he was wont to observe, "has been arranged after considerable study of their natural disadvantages. It is absurd to think that you can place a chair here so cleverly as I can. Those who live in a place, understand where the draughts and other drawbacks lie. All houses, chambers, lodgings, &c., have their weak points, blemishes not to be counteracted. Sit where I put you, and you will be comfortable. Move your chair according to your whim, and don't blame me if you have a crick in the neck."

It was true that the Major was not given to entertain visitors. It was only upon rare occasions that he invited a guest even to smoke a cigar in his chambers, and, social buccaneer that he was, yet he was scrupulous as an Arab under his own roof tree. If you dined with him at his club, and hinted at écarté to pass away the evening, you would find him a dangerous antagonist, albeit he did not play very often; but nobody had ever succeeded in making the Major produce cards in his own rooms. It was probably matter of calculation. When the Major played, it was in the way of business, and he scorned to play for sugar-plums; but he was too well aware of what the world would say of a man like himself, who should win a big stake in his own chambers. The Major thought rightly that he had a character to maintain. There were not wanting scandal mongers, who would have retorted that he had a character to obtain.

The Major, enveloped in a well-wadded

dressing-gown, is ensconced in that most scientifically disposed lounging-chair, and immersed in thought. He is stimulating his intellect with a large cabana, and some cognac and seltzer, aids to reflection by no means to be despised upon occasion. He is gradually piecing out why it is that Mr. Roxby appealed to him at all about finding a husband for Bessie Stanbury, and he has arrived at a very fair guess at the truth.

"Yes," he mutters, slowly ejecting a long wreath of tobacco smoke, "he must intend to seize upon a good slice of that girl's money on her wedding, and I suppose he thought rightly, if she was snapped up by any of his business friends, or any young fellow in that way, that the settlements would be looked pretty sharply after. If, on the other hand, he can marry her to some broken-down swell from this end of town, he doubtless reckons on his being a man too needy to inquire very closely into things, and too

anxious for the marriage to dare to quarrel with his bride-elect's guardian. One who could put his veto on the match for the next three years, at all events, and without whose aid and countenance the wedding would in all probability never take place. Possible," continued the Major, musingly, "that my esteemed friend, Roxby, has already made away with a considerable portion of that thirty thousand pounds. It wouldn't surprise me in the least. However, it's not likely that he will allow a glimmer of that to leap out. This young Detfield, too, apparently, is not disposed to second my exertions on his behalf—a piece of imbecility on his part, that I shall have to counsel Simmonds & Co., to put a speedy stopper on. I don't know, but it certainly does occur to me that Roxby might find him not quite so docile when it comes to the point, as he reckons upon. Rather a self-willed young man. Hum! I don't know that I have made a very good selection, and yet at

the moment he seemed the very man. Absurd, situated as he is, that he should presume to differ from his advisers. It's d——d ungrateful, that's what it is," growled the Major, wrathfully.

But as he thought it over, the Major's face cleared a little. True, at the first glance, it would seem very much against his, the Major's interest, if Detfield should decline to woo the heiress pointed out to him ; yet if he should do so, and then prove refractory at the last moment—suppose he should win the girl's consent, and decline to accede to old Roxby's conditions, whatever they might be. The Major rather chuckled at the idea. He had already perceived that difficulties or no difficulties, Detfield had a will of his own, and was capable of facing all the consequences of his embarrassments, sooner than extricate himself by a distasteful marriage. It was equally probable that Roxby's proposals, when he should come to hear of them, would strike the guardsman in

quite another light from that in which the financier viewed them. The Major had no idea what they would be, but it did occur to him that what Roxby would airily designate a little business transaction, Detfield might apply a very different epithet to.

"Yes," mused the Major, "that really would suit me better than anything else. If he should win the girl and come to loggerheads with old Roxby about the settlements, my fee certainly would be in danger, but the old fox would have to show his hand, and I might pick up a little information that would give me the whip-hand of my dear friend Roxby for life. I should think *that* cheap at £500. But confound that fellow, Detfield, how's he to win a girl if he won't make love to her? and he's refused all the invitations Roxby has sent him. We must make him feel his difficulties a little—he must understand that Simmonds requires to be humoured—that whatever his ultimate in-

tentions may be, 'going in' for a wealthy marriage is the only thing, except a settlement, to pacify that christianized Jew just now, and I must trust to the girl herself, and Mrs. Paynter's counsels to do the rest. It was a masterly conception that of deceiving her with regard to which Miss Stanbury was the heiress. Such a coquette as Mrs. Paynter would never resign an admirer to a possible rival, I have only to take care that she does not discover the mistake until too late."

The Major was an artist in social intrigue. He revelled in it, and wove or repaired the broken threads of his numerous schemes with all the patience and industry of a hungry spider. He had always been particularly fortunate in the delicate operation of bringing two people together with a view to matrimony, and rubbed his hands softly as he looked back upon more than one successful negotiation of that description.

"Hum, that's settled," murmured the

Major, gently throwing himself back in his chair and watching the smoke wreaths as they curled above his head, "that is to say, I've decided how I'm to play my game, and what will be the most profitable result to Claxby Jenkens, the only person I have to care about in the affair. Now," continued the Major, knocking the ash of his cigar carefully into a little china saucer, "I have two other bits of business that require immediate attention. Item first, the Montague Gores have returned from their wedding trip, and I must see Mrs. Montague. It is a thousand pities I found her too late. If I could have spoken to her before that marriage! what sort of a marriage is this that she has made? How came it about? Psha!" he muttered, "what nonsense, don't I know? Left as she was, poor child, what else could she do, but accept the first man that offered her a home—and I had intended that it should be so different. I had meant that Cissy should choose whom she liked

this time. I chose for her the first, I thought I had insured her wealth at all events. I think if I had met Hemsworth a year or two ago, knowing what I do now, he would not have lived as long as he did. I suppose he would have fought if collared, and by my soul he'd have a fair chance to judge of my shooting," and the Major's eyes gleamed with a savage light, such as men's carry when the thirst for blood possesses them. "I kept away from them, I thought it best; what have I on earth to love but her? Well, I didn't want—no, of course; I'm a disreputable old vagabond, and the world says hard things of me, would say harder perhaps if it dared. I didn't want my darling to be clogged with an old father of whom such queer stories are afloat. I dare say she thought me unkind. They call me hard—I am, but it's all for her. Cissy, I must see you again, my child, if only to hear from your own lips that you are happy."

No one of Claxby Jenkens' acquaintance

would have recognised their cool cynical friend in the man who, with eyes suffused with tears, bent over the fire and gulped down a rising sob or two with difficulty. Yet it was so. The battered old heart, hard as granite to the world generally, had this one soft spot in it, an oasis in the desert. Claxby Jenkens, in all his scheming, plotting and plundering, had ever an eye to leaving a snug fortune to his daughter. His one anxiety for some years had been to get the girl settled in life. He knew too well what sort of reception a daughter of his was likely to receive in society. When he had married her to Hemsworth, he deemed his end accomplished. He had looked more at Hemsworth's position than at his character. It was the light in which a man like the Major would be sure to regard a *parti* for his daughter. He disappeared immediately after the wedding, his reasons we already know. It was well perhaps that it had been so.

The Major would have been likely to call Hemsworth sternly to account for his neglect of his wife, a father-in-law with whom quibble or evasion would have scarce passed current. Mark Hemsworth had been just the man to have cowered before him, but to have brutally avenged himself on Cissy afterwards. However, that was a past now dead and buried. It was the future that was to be looked to, and no fond and respectable father of a family ever felt more anxious about the happiness of his favourite daughter than did this world-worn social marauder.

"Yes," he muttered, "I must see Cissy in the first place, not much difficulty about that; in the second, I must find Tim Turbottle. Who could have dreamt of his leaving the old cigar shop, and taking it into his head to wander about the country. However, of course he is to be found, it is only a question of time. It will be as well not to be in a hurry. I shall be better able

to form an opinion of Mr. Montague Gore after a little. If you have made as great a mistake for yourself, child, as I did for you, it will be well that you should have something to fall back upon." With which reflection, the Major emptied his goblet and betook himself to bed.

Claxby Jenkens thinks, like many other intriguers, that he holds the strings that shall guide the destinies of three or four persons in this history; but it may likely prove the old story, that those he deems his puppets, will not dance to his pipe. It occurs to these diplomatists at times, to find that they have failed to gauge the course that man or woman will take under certain conditions. We know what we ourselves would do under such circumstance, but forget that others may regard things in a different light. We scheme to make the happiness of our friends, perhaps, and go a long way to make them miserable. Ideas of Elysium do not always coincide. Above all, we do not agree with-

our intimates, concerning what is best for us. The Major would fain smooth Cissy's path in this world, and yet he had failed signally so far. It is possible that his further manœuvres may prove equally unsuccessful.

Still he is so wedded to his accustomed mole-like strategy, that he could hardly be induced to try a straight-forward and above-board course. So impressed with the maxim that his neighbour is continually striving to do his duty by getting the better of him, that it behoves him to work with secrecy and caution. Much exercised in his mind and strengthened in his creed by the conduct of neighbour Roxby at this present, and feeling that mankind is less than ever to be trusted, and that his designs and intentions cannot be too carefully shrouded from those whom they may concern—the fates are working for him more than he knows, but your social diplomatist is only too apt to mar what he would fain achieve by in-

judicious interference. The Major is an artist, it must be admitted, but the man who trusts nobody, invariably pays the penalty of misconstruing human nature.

CHAPTER III.

MRS. PAYNTER'S SACRIFICE.

MRS. PAYNTER has hardly yet got over Cissy's wedding. That lively lady alludes to it with a mock pathos, irresistibly ludicrous.

"A nice thing for her, of course it is, poor darling! She had nothing you know, and will make Montague Gore a charming wife." Mrs. Paynter is apt to be a little incoherent when excited, and speaks as if poverty was a necessary ingredient of a charming wife. "But the ceremony was dreadful. It was quite shocking to be

married in that way; really, you know, it might as well have been all done at a registrar's office. Nobody there, and I in such a lovely dress, it was quite sinful not to be seen in it. Yes, we stole into church as if engaged in some criminal proceeding; if we had been after the communion plate, it would have been impossible to have felt more guilty. I was conscious of a creeping sensation all the time, such as I presume accompanies infringement of the law. I cowered beneath the eye of the beadle, and shouldn't have been surprised if I had been taken into custody at the church door. No," Mrs. Paynter, would conclude, with a shrug of her shoulders and upraising of her delicate brows. "I can't say what I may take part in before I die, but I'll never, never have anything to do with a quiet wedding again."

"Well," replied Charlie Detfield, when this sad story was unfolded to him. "All weddings are rather melancholy affairs, don't you think so?"

"Certainly not," retorted Mrs. Paynter, her blue eyes dancing with mirth, "I expect yours to be rather good fun. When do you marry your grandmother? beg pardon, Charlie, I mean the Islington woman."

"I should think never," retorted Detfield, brusquely.

"But you must, you know," said Mrs. Paynter, gently. "How are the debts ever to be settled if you don't. You won't tell me much, men never do about such troubles; but my poor Charlie I know all, never mind how. Marry money you must, and that very soon. She is not so very old, and she looks a nice good-natured woman. It will all do very well."

"Ah! you know I've the rope round my neck, do you?" exclaimed Detfield, bitterly. "Doesn't it ever strike you that there may be other ways of escaping from my troubles. That one can sell out, cut London, and begin life anew."

"Yes, Charlie, I have thought of all

that," replied the lady, in a voice so low that it was scarce above a whisper. "Begin life again, eh! but how? it is so difficult for such as you."

Coquette as she was, Lizzie was thoroughly in earnest. She felt keenly for Detfield, and perhaps realized the hopelessness of his position, better than he did. She was very fond of him in her way. If you ask, did she love him? No. Lizzie Paynter's heart was in the safe keeping of the last man society would have suspected of possessing it—her husband. But that did not in the least prevent her having a *tendresse* for some one of her admirers; besides, Lizzie invariably had a *ciscebo*, and Detfield at present was in possession of that post.

Charlie was silent. He, too, when he had thought over his future, had sometimes wondered what there was that he could turn his hand to. It is not so easy to say, after half a dozen years of a military life, how best to set about earning your bread.

"No, believe me," continued Mrs. Paynter, at length, "this marriage is the best thing for you. She is certain to be married, and may light upon a very much worse husband than you; of course she is a little old for you, but you can't have everything. She, at all events, will have a gentleman for a husband, and I don't think, Charlie, you could ever ill-treat a woman."

"Does it ever strike you that all this sounds somewhat singular from your lips?"

"Yes! but it is for your own good. Do you think if things were otherwise, I would let you marry if I could prevent it. No, Charlie, I am giving up something, too. We must bury the past. I shall wear mourning for, for what's been for a little, and then we shall be friends, staunch friends, you know, for life," and Mrs. Paynter bowed her head in attitude of the prettiest resignation.

It was a curious thing, but Detfield had fallen by accident into the same mistake

that Mrs. Paynter had been intentionally led into by the Major. He had thought rightly that Bessie Stanbury was the heiress in the first instance; but Mrs. Paynter had laughingly pointed out Aunt Clem to him, in the course of that evening at Barnsbury Park, as the lady who possessed thirty thousand pounds. Charlie, very careless about the matter, and having little intention of getting out of his difficulties in such fashion, had at once imagined himself mistaken. He thought it so much more probable that the elderly spinster was the wealthy bride recommended to his notice, than that pretty girl in all the flush and excitement of her first ball. Detfield was quite as convinced that Miss Clementina was the lady rejoicing in all these golden allurements, as Mrs. Paynter herself. To him Aunt Clem represented the Miss Kilmansegge of Islington. He did not think it necessary to mention his last meeting with Bessie. Men are shy of mentioning their discomfitures

to the woman they love, we know, and the bicycle business was likely to evoke more laughter than sympathy. To express admiration for one pretty woman to another is usually considered injudicious, but it certainly requires a clear conscience. Charlie was dimly aware of thinking rather more about Bessie Stanbury, than his allegiance to Mrs. Paynter quite warranted.

"I suppose it must be so, sooner or later," he replied, at length. "I have got pretty near to the end of my tether, and whatever may be my destiny, I am not likely to see much more of you. Yes, I'm about broke. You'll miss me a little, Lizzie, I think."

"You know I shall," interposed Mrs. Paynter rapidly. "You know I would do anything in my power to help you. Advice is all I have to give, and once more I say emphatically, marry the heiress."

"Suppose the heiress won't marry me," returned Detfield, smiling.

"I shall suppose nothing of the sort, Sir, till you have tried. I think, Charlie, you could make love rather nicely if you gave your mind to it."

"Ah! you think so."

"You don't deserve an answer, but just for once I'll say I know it," returned Mrs. Paynter, with an arch flash of her bright eyes.

"And knowing that?"

"I say go away and do it."

"I don't see the necessity of going away."

"But I do," cried Mrs. Paynter, springing to her feet, and giving an impatient stamp of her little foot. "What fools you men are. Charlie, if I didn't care for you, I should let you keep philandering about me to the last. But it can't be. You must think of yourself. Leave me now, and next time I see you, tell me you are engaged to the heiress. You'll have no truer or stauncher friend than Lizzie Paynter. Do you understand me now?"

"Not in the least," replied Detfield, curtly. "I have a strong idea that I am dismissed—to make way for somebody else, I presume."

"Unjust!" she cried, and for a second she turned her face from him, and leant upon the mantel-piece. "Well, let it be so. If you misunderstand me now," she continued, facing him, and rearing her head haughtily, "Miss Stanbury will gain a worse husband than I thought."

"Pardon me," he said, in a low voice, after a short pause. "The bitter idea of parting with you, must be my excuse for my brutal remark. I would I could recall it. I do understand you, and if I don't do what you wish, believe me, I recognize you would banish me for my own good."

"That's like your old self, Charlie," exclaimed Lizzie, extending her hand. "Now, say good-bye, and remember, firm friends ever."

He pressed her hands passionately, raised

them for an instant to his lips, then murmured "firm friends ever," and was gone.

Mrs. Paynter threw herself back in her chair, and mused very sadly over the scene she had just gone through. Her life was passed in these flirtations, yet she was always to a certain extent quite in earnest at the time. She had been very fond of Detfield, that is to say in her way. He had suited her exactly. He had never made an attempt to pass that indescribable boundary at which Mrs. Paynter considered her admirer's homage ought to stop—that her admirers should sometimes not quite recognize this particular point, was scarcely to be wondered at. But Mrs. Paynter was very impatient with any mistake concerning it. She had been most thoroughly truthful in what she had told Detfield. If she had cared about him less, she would have kept him dangling about her. She dismissed him, because she honestly thought that was the only thing to

save him. It may sound like an anomaly to say that a woman entertains a sincere love and esteem for her husband, and yet lives a life of perpetual flirtation—is never satisfied without an admirer at her side; but the thing is. There are women such coquettes by nature, that they crave admiration as an opium eater does the fatal drug. It becomes ingrained into their very being. Their heart is never involved, their feelings, perhaps, slightly, their vanity considerably. The parading an admirer before the world is a great gratification to such women. They have no desire that their affairs should be hid from society. Society usually has its mouth very full of them, but after all, it is generally their more demure sisters who occasion society to hold up its hands, and make moan over their backslidings.

"It might all fit in so very nicely," thought Mrs. Paynter. "If he would but try in earnest, he would be sure to succeed.

Women at that age, unless they are purse proud, are apt to get a little uneasy lest they should not get married at all. She didn't give me the idea of being puffed up by her riches. A pleasant, good-tempered body, I should say. A little old for Charlie, perhaps, decidedly so, indeed—might almost be his mother, but we could soften it down a good deal, if we got her into the hands of a west-end modiste. These fifteen years might be toned down to seven or eight (about the actual difference between them) with a little attention to the toilette. A mere nothing. But he! there's the difficulty—he'll not make an effort, I am sacrificing myself for nothing, and he is so very nice. These men they never do understand what's good for them. He'd rather, hem! talk to me, than make love to Miss Stanbury," and here Mrs. Paynter rose, and crossing the room, deliberately contemplated her pretty face in the glass.

The result was apparently satisfactory,

for after gazing at herself for some seconds, an arch smile stole over her countenance, and with a light laugh, she exclaimed,

"Perhaps he's right. If I were a man, I think I also should prefer it."

Of a verity, the Major secured a valuable auxiliary, when he conceived the bold idea of calling upon Mrs. Paynter.

As for Detfield, he is at present something like the Irishman's pig, that allowed itself to be driven so peaceably towards Cork, because it was under the delusion that its owner wanted it to go to Limerick. This marriage is very distasteful to him—he had declared he would not repair his broken fortunes in that way. But men have made such resolutions before, and yielded at last to the special pleading of friends, and to the force of circumstances. In the meanwhile, under the impression that she is a portionless girl, Charlie bids fair to glide into a flirtation with Bessie Stanbury. Of course there is every possible reason for his not doing so, regarding

Bessie as he does, but the perversity of pigs is often paralleled in human nature. A tendency to fall in love with those they ought not, has been a common frailty of humanity since the world began.

He meditates a good deal upon wooing the Islington heiress, as he strolls leisurely down Portland Place. It is so very odd, he thinks, that Lizzie Paynter should advocate it so warmly. It is rather unlike her. Curious it was with the Paynters he first made his bow in Barnsbury Park. By the way, now he comes to think of it, t'was Mrs. Paynter who had made him accept that invitation. How came she to be thus travelling out of her usual sphere? What took her into a society so foreign to her accustomed haunts. As Charlie reflects on this, he begins to have a vague suspicion that there is a conspiracy to marry him to Miss Clementina. But then how came it about that the Major and Mrs. Paynter should be engaged together in such a scheme.

Why, they were not even acquainted. Suddenly flashes across him a shadowy recollection of seeing them talking together at that ball. He cannot remember distinctly, yet he has an impression that it was so. Well, suppose he swims with the stream and tries his luck.

"I shan't break my heart if she says no, that's one comfort," he muttered, with a grim smile, "and shall feel tolerably mean if she chances to say yes. Of course, it's done every day, and I don't suppose I am justified in refusing good counsel. Why shouldn't I also go in for money? There is one thing it would necessitate visiting a good deal in Barnsbury Park, and I shall see something more of Bessie Stanbury, which will be pleasant if nothing else is. Settled, carried, no one dissenting. I am to make love to the old lady—a matter of business, and if I have a chance to flirt a little with the niece—well, I am a weak mortal, and shall really deserve some slight relaxation.

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I shall come to grief over it, I know. I've a conviction I'm opening the campaign on wrong principles, and shall be eloquent in the wrong place. What I have been trying to say all day to the aunt, will come blundering out to the niece in the evening, and I shall wind up by proposing to the wrong woman. Well, it's a consolation to think that I can't be in a bigger mess than I am now, and if I do lose my head, and ask Miss Bessie to marry me, we can't get any further. We can't wed upon my debts, and, by Jove! that's about all the property left me. Paragraph for the *Post*. 'We regret to announce that Captain Detfield, of the Household Brigade has succumbed to the prevailing epidemic. His resources proving unequal to the demands made upon them, after a lingering and painful struggle, he departed (for the continent) tranquilly this morning. His loss will be much felt (for forty-eight hours) in the fashionable world, in which he was an universal favourite.'"

And then Charlie indulged in a low laugh at his own little jest—such laughter as men make when they mock their own miseries. Such laughter as rings cracked and hollow on the ear, and prefaces at times criminal solution of the knot men's follies have tied.

Charlie Detfield spoke of his difficulties lightly, but they were gnawing sharply at his heart-strings nevertheless, and bitterest drop in his cup, perhaps, was the thought of leaving his regiment. He loved the old corps very dearly, and regretted much that his days in it were already numbered

CHAPTER IV.

AFTER THE HONEYMOON.

MONTAGUE GORE has returned from his wedding trip, and established himself and bride in Park Crescent. He is charmed with his wife. He has found her the brightest and most intelligent of companions, and yet even now there falls at times a slight shadow across his life that causes him to wince, and wonder whether it will ever be swept away. Cissy is always kind, courteous, and good-tempered, but he feels that there is an inner life of which she reveals nothing. It is not that she is

a lifeless statue—on the contrary, she displays plenty of animation, and enters eagerly into such sight seeing or society as may fall in their way. She is always pleasant and bright in her manner, but no caress ever escapes her. She yields placidly to his kiss, but she never returns it.

Montague Gore thinks at times sadly that he has failed to win this woman's heart —that for all the love he lavishes upon her, she has none to give back. Will he succeed in touching it, or is she of so reticent a temperament that she will ever keep that inner self locked firmly within her own bosom? He knows there are such natures—cool, phlegmatic, self-reliant beings, in whom the craving for sympathy, so common to mankind, does not exist. Can Cissy be one of these? he thinks not. The way her face lights up when anything pleases her, forbids him to think so. Montague Gore arrives at the conclusion that

the key to his wife's heart is not in his keeping.

He is one of those highly sensitive imaginative men usually so ingenious in self-torture. The great catastrophe of his early life had crushed all thought of woman's love out of him for years. For some time after that terrible blow he abandoned all society, and took refuge in hard work. And work came to him in plenty, even his brethren on circuit were astonished at the quantity he managed to get through. Now he had once more given full rein to his affections, and was sensitive as a woman in his love. Again and again he told himself that he was a fool, and tried hard to put this thought away from him. She had told him, when he asked her to marry him, that she liked but did not love him.

Well, was she not all that he had any right to expect? Could he not rest satisfied with quiet regard and esteem, and trust to time for the rest. Plenty of men would be

perfectly satisfied with what Cissy gave to him, but he unluckily was not one of them. He thirsted for her entire love. Cissy would have told him, had he talked to her on the subject, that she did not believe it was in her nature to love in that manner; but it may be doubted whether he would have derived much comfort from that assurance. Resolutely though he might try to put this thought away from him—angry as he felt sometimes at his own folly—still it was ever recurring to his mind, floating dimly before him in the bustle of the Courts at Westminster, standing out clear and distinct in the stillness of the night-time, gathering strength slowly but surely, as all such morbid ideas will. Montague Gore is cherishing a phantom that may chance to lay his hearth desolate should it grow up.

And yet the charm of her manner, her piquante graceful ways, increase the wild passionate love that he has for her daily.

Cissy's nature, though she is utterly unaware of it, is expanding under the tender watchfulness of her husband. In that first luckless marriage of hers, she had been treated alternately as a pet child, and with brutal neglect. Bullied and sneered at, she had lost confidence in her own powers. She had many times wondered whether she was indeed the fool Mark Hemsworth so continually asserted her to be.

She had shrunk from the coarse associates to whom he so often introduced her. Her woman's intuitive delicacy had forbid her to make a friend in all that money-making, speculating circle, in which her Paris life had been passed. Fungi of the Bourse, who were rolling in riches to-day and heaven knows where on the morrow. Men who bought everything, reckless of price if it were the fashion, but could no more understand the pictures which adorned their walls, or the music they paid such sums to listen to, than if they had been bereft of sense

and hearing—women whose sole end was to outshine each other in dress, equipage and display.

During these five years Cissy's inner nature had laid dormant. Her finer feelings and intellectual faculties, from the time she left the convent, had been locked, congealed, as the sea in an Arctic winter. To be the best dressed woman in Paris, her highest ambition. To be present at the first exhibition of anything notable, play, opera, a two-headed child, or a Patagonian giantess, the subject of her most strenuous desire and intriguing. Yet in the midst of all this incessant turmoil, the girl, for she was no more, had a vague feeling that she was made for something better. She would sit at times before some of those pictures that Mark Hemsworth had collected from mere pride of purse, and gaze at them till the painter's higher meaning stole gradually into her mind. She would occasionally become so absorbed at the opera as to turn a deaf

ear to the vapid compliments with which she was so constantly beset, and give cause to their utterers to petulantly endorse Mark Hemsworth's statement, that his wife was a fool. And yet they were constrained to admit Madame Hemsworth could talk well at times.

One of the first things that had attracted her to Lizzie Paynter, was this lady's soft caressing manner. Secondly, Mrs. Paynter was cultivated in her tastes, and in spite of her irrepressible passion for flirtation, had a genuine admiration for art as far as she understood it, whether it was in poetry, painting, music or fiction. Another thing, too, although it may seem almost an anomaly, was that despite her besetting weakness, there was something very genuine about Lizzie. She could not help that, but if men only understood her, she was very honest even then. It was they who made the mistake, if they did not comprehend that the affair was to be limited to a little sentiment.

But now Cissy was living a very different life. Montague Gore treated her always with deference, and constantly talked to her if he did not consult her about his own work. She was thrown in contact with clever men, and heard much talk that interested her with regard to books, music, &c. Her husband's friends, some of them were engaged more or less in such occupations, and listened to Cissy's naïve spirited comments on these matters with evident pleasure and amusement. She took to reading also. It annoyed her to be ignorant of what was current topic of conversation amongst the world in which she now lived. You would have said she was improving every day, and adapting herself week by week to be a fit mate for the man she had married.

She comes into her pretty breakfast-parlour, fresh as a rose this May morning, attired in a bewitching costume highly suggestive of Paris to a feminine eye. Her

husband glances fondly at her, as she makes her appearance, and exclaims,

"Late, Cissy. Be quick with the tea, please, child, for I have no time to spare. Rather an ominous pile of letters for you."

"I am so sorry. I don't know how I came to be so late. You shall have your tea, though, in a moment," and Cissy busied herself with the cups and saucers.

Her husband, meanwhile, betook himself to his meal with the air of a man who had no time to spare. Cissy having completed her arrangements, commenced to investigate her correspondence. As her husband said, it was rather an ominous little heap that lay by the side of her plate. Square-shaped unpromising billets directed in stiff, clerkly hand-writing, such as are wont to be more or less familiar to most of us about Christmas time. Cissy knit her brows more than once as she ran her eye over them, and at last could not refrain from an ejaculation.

"A hundred and fifty-three pounds!" she exclaimed. "The wretch! Why, I have had positively nothing for it."

Montague Gore raised his head. A milliner's bill was an experience that he had not yet encountered.

"Sounds a deal of money, Cissy. Is that from your dressmaker?"

"From one of them," replied his wife carelessly. "I shouldn't mind so much, but she is not worth the prices she charges. I have to go to Paris when I want anything nice, but not living there, I can't deal altogether with my old modiste."

Montague Gore becomes conscious of a second revelation. A man usually confines himself to one tailor, but ladies who aspire to "art in petticoats" find work for many milliners.

"I hope devoutly that those malevolent looking epistles are not all on quite so large a scale," remarked Gore, somewhat curiously.

"They come to a good bit of money; but you needn't look frightened, Montague, this time," rejoined Cissy laughing, "I have got a little of my own money left still. You see I had to get some things for our wedding, and it costs so much to dress decently now-a-days, and one must do it."

She said this with the air of one who lays down a proposition which admits of no possible dispute.

Gore remained silent for a moment. Like the generality of men, he was only conscious that a woman's dress became her. He had no idea of the details that went to make up the picture. He admired it as a whole, but whether it was expensive or inexpensive never entered his thoughts. He did know his wife was always dressed most becomingly, but it had never occurred to him that even her plainest toilets were very costly. Just now he is putting together "a hundred and fifty-three pounds" and "dressing decently."

It strikes him that he doesn't quite understand that last phrase.

He smiles as he replies, "Well, my dear, of course you must be what you call decent, but I should have thought it might have been done a little cheaper."

"I dare say it might; but I'll own that I'm stupid about such things, and never can manage to get things so cheap as other people. I'm no use at bargaining, you see."

"Never mind, all I meant was that I should think there are lots of ladies in London who can't afford to have two or three milliners' bills of that amount, and yet contrive to look decent."

"Do you know what Lizzie says?" cried Cissy laughing. "She says there are two classes of women—those who dress themselves and those who clothe themselves."

"Meaning, I presume, those who are rich and those who are poor."

"Nothing of the sort. Lizzie is quite

right, there are plenty of women who go about clad in silks and satins, and it is to be hoped not quite in their right minds, and there are plenty more who trot about dressed in cheap muslins or merinos."

"Well, when you feel economically disposed, I should recommend those latter fabrics to your notice."

"No," replied Cissy shaking her head, "they don't suit me. I am very sorry for you, Montague, but I only look my best in rich attire; and the woman who is not always anxious to look her best is absorbed in pursuit of political rights, elevating her status, freeing herself from the slavery your sex has imposed on us, or some equally unfeminine employment."

"I must be off. Good-bye," said Gore, as he rose and kissed his wife. "Don't think I want you to count your shillings too closely, but recollect we have not Aladdin's Lamp in the house, and that we are people of moderate means."

"Moderate means!" thought Cissy as the door closed behind him. "Now I do wonder what I am to understand by that. I have never asked him anything about his income yet, but I think I must. I don't want to get Montague into any difficulty, and I know I've been taught so far only to dress and spend money. If I have to economize, I'm sure I shan't know how to begin."

"Moderate means" is rather an indefinite term. So is "dressing decently." Cissy is as puzzled how to interpret the former, as her husband how to understand the latter.

But Cissy has not quite come to the end of her correspondence. There is a letter or two left yet unopened, and as she listlessly turns them over her face flushes. Her eyes sparkle, as they meet the neat precise superscription that is on the little note at the bottom of the heap. How well she knew the handwriting once. What years it is since she has seen it. Writing

of one who loved her well, and who she also loved. What secret tears she has shed because he so ruthlessly, so unaccountably abandoned her.

He had told her when she married Mark Hemsworth that she would neither see nor hear from him for a long time. He had enjoined her never to speak of him. Never even to acknowledge the relationship.

She could not understand why, but she had promised and stood loyally to her word. She had thought over it many a time since, and wondered what it was that he dreaded. Had he been connected with dangerous mercantile speculations, or was he involved in some of those numberless political schemes always, as she knew, rife in Paris for overturning the Government whatever it might be. She was such a child at the time of her marriage it was little likely that he would trust her, kind and indulgent father as he had ever proved. Still he had most solemnly

adjured her never to speak of him, never to inquire after him till she should hear from himself. Then she was to be guided by what he wrote, and now here was a letter from him after all these years. Did he even know, she thought, how often his Cissy had wanted him in those troublous days that she had been Mark Hemsworth's wife? How many times, when heart-sick from neglect or brutal gibes, she had longed for some friend or relation on whose bosom to pour forth the salt tears which she confided only to her pillow—for someone to whom she might sob forth the story of her ill-treatment and unhappiness. How often she had thought that if he only knew he would have taken his darling away, or read Mark Hemsworth such a lesson as would have ensured her from insult, at all events, in the future.

The circle in which she moved, though they deemed Cissy a fortunate woman, inasmuch as she possessed an excellent establishment and perfect equipages, were not

blind to Mark Hemsworth's jeering manner to his young wife, nor to the fact of those more cowardly insults which a coarse-minded libertine can pass on the woman who has the misfortune to be tied to him. More than one of her acquaintances, wedded as they were to dress and display, had wondered how she bore with Mark Hemsworth.

But Hemsworth, although he did not know the reason, knew that her father intended to reside entirely in England, and that Cissy was ignorant of his address. He had not dared to treat her so otherwise. Whatever else he might be, the Major was a man of nerve and determination. His son-in-law had been simply a boisterous bully, and as a matter of course an arrant cur at bottom.

Cissy's hand shook a little as she at last broke open the envelope. What he was, what he might be reckoned amongst men, she neither thought nor cared. To her in

her girlhood he had been kindest, most loving, most patient of fathers, and she had had so few to care for her. There was a mist before her eyes as she read,

"Dearest Cissy,

"You have doubtless thought me cruel, unkind, forgetful, for never seeing or writing to you all these years. My child, now I have arrived at some idea of what you have gone through, I am covered with shame, anger, and confusion. It is well, perhaps, that I did not know sooner the story of your Paris life. I know it even now imperfectly, but my pulses tingle yet with what I have learned recently. Hemsworth is gone, so there is happily no more to be said, though I acknowledge still to a feeling of regret that it is out of my power to call him to account for his treatment of you. That is a story of the past, however, let it lie buried.

"Cissy, don't think I deserted you. I cut myself off from all knowledge of you as I thought, for your advantage. I could not explain why to you then. I can hardly do so now without humiliating myself. You will not force your father to do this. It was a mistake. I thought I left you settled in life, with everything a reasonable woman could wish for. That your husband would turn out what he did never entered my head. I did my utmost to discover you, when I learnt Hemsworth was dead. I found you, but it may be too late. When I did see you, it was before the altar of St. George's Church; I saw you married for the second time. I am perhaps nervous and fanciful, child, but it is possible that this marriage also may turn out unhappily. I know how you were left, that you had no choice hardly but to marry. Could I have found you a little sooner, you would have known, at all events, that was no necessity. I must see you, to learn from your own lips

that you are well, and wedded to a man who at least treats you with kindness and respect. But the reasons that made me separate myself from you still exist. I cannot call at your house. Your husband must remain ignorant of the connexion between us, indeed I would prefer that he should be ignorant of my very existence. Write me a line then here, to tell me when and where I can see you, till then,

"Believe me, dearest Cissy,

"Your affectionate father,

"JOHN CLAXBY JENKENS.

"6, Charles Street, Berkley Square."

Cissy read this letter through twice, and then sat twisting it absently in her fingers. She was thinking how long it was since she had seen the writer. How attentive and kind he had always been to her girlish whims and wishes. How delighted she would be to see him once more. It was almost as if he had come back from the

grave, she had so long and so entirely lost sight of him. It never entered her head that clandestine meetings are always liable to involve a woman in trouble; of course she should keep his secret, and do his bidding. She had always done what he told her. She would write at once and say where they were to meet, of course, under the circumstances, it must be somewhere rather out of the way. Cissy opened a map of London, and pondered as to where she should appoint her rendezvous. She did not know the big city very well, but it suddenly struck her that some of the squares lying west between her house and the Marble Arch usually wore a deserted appearance, and one of these squares it should be.

CHAPTER V.

A QUINTETTE.

THAT Mrs. Paynter would be one of Cissy's earliest visitors, was only natural. She really, in her butterfly fashion, was very fond of the bride, and had been immensely pleased at that rather necessary, and as she considered it, most appropriate marriage.

"She is charming and penniless, he is nice and has a nice income, what can be more suitable?" demanded Mrs. Paynter. "Charming women without money are or ought to be the destiny of men who have—

those are their affinities. You see I study Swedenborg and Spiritualism. John was mine, and we suit one another exactly; ask him? He don't mind my flirting. He doesn't bother himself much about me unless I want anything, then he takes any amount of trouble to get it for me. As I am always wanting something, John is perpetually interested in me. I was made for him. He would have ceased to care about a woman who was not exigeante as myself. There's another thing," and the volatile lady's face softened as she made this admission, "dear old John is the only man who does know me, both the worst and the best of me."

It is possible, not perhaps very uncommon, for man and woman to tread life's path together, and never comprehend each other to the end.

"You've a very pretty house, Cissy," exclaimed Mrs. Paynter, on her first visit, "and of course I think the situation perfec-

tion. It is near me, and I am perfection, you know. Besides it's delightful to have you established so close. It has taken me all this time to get over your surreptitious wedding. How could you submit to such a thing? I felt a guilty creature for days afterwards—as if I had assisted at something unlawful. Did you feel married? Do you feel married yet?"

"Montague and I both wished a quiet wedding," replied Cissy, laughing.

"I don't mind quiet weddings," rejoined Mrs. Paynter, solemnly, "but yours was a clandestine marriage."

"Not quite; but who had we to ask? You and your husband were my sole friends in London. Montague only wanted the man or two he had, Mr. Brine and the others."

"I never saw him before, but I don't like Mr. Brine," returned Mrs. Paynter, sententiously. "A man who had nothing civil to say to a woman who looked as well

as I did that day, must be a monster. One of those connecting links with the Zoological that Mr. Darwin talks about."

"You did look well," replied Cissy, with a little of the enthusiasm of the Paris days. "It should have been a gay wedding if only to let the world see you."

"My dear," said Mrs. Paynter, with a mock expression of anguish. "I was a poem—a poem without interpreters. Let us drop the subject. I shall never be a poem again, let my modiste do her utmost. I don't want to be indiscreet, but I presume you find Montague all you could wish?"

"Kindness itself. He consults me about everything. After my former experience, you may suppose what a charm such deference has for me," and Cissy experienced a vague feeling of annoyance. What business had Mrs. Paynter to call her husband by his Christian name?

If she had reflected, she would have re-

membered that Lizzie was rather addicted to speak of her male acquaintance in this fashion.

"Yes, he was always perfect in that way. He didn't affect society very much, but Montie Gore was always courtesy itself, when he had to deal with our sex," replied Mrs. Paynter, musingly.

Cissy was no whit better pleased by this remark. She did not care to hear historiettes of her husband's courtesy to others before she knew him. Again his Christian name was her property now—to be shared only with authentic relations. What right had Mrs. Paynter to use this diminutive—a thing she had never as yet allowed herself to do.

"You will have to bring him out, my dear," exclaimed Lizzie, enthusiastically. "If he has shirked society thus far, the loss has been society's. He can talk brilliantly when he chooses. I know no one I would rather be taken down to dinner by, than

your husband. He was always adamant till he met you. Impervious to our smiles, but pleasant."

She was literally hardly conscious of it, but there floated into Cissy's mind, as her visitor spoke, the misty thought—had Lizzie Paynter ever tried the effects of her charms upon this husband of hers? The thought was so vague, so indefinite, that if you had taxed Cissy with it at the moment, she would have given it unqualified denial. A mere germ—but such germs, by force of circumstances, sometimes flourish and bear fruit, at others, nothing assisting them, they perish in the mind which gave them birth.

"You have known Montague for some years, I suppose?" inquired Cissy, carelessly.

"Yes, I really forget how long exactly, but we certainly are old acquaintance now—old friends, I hope, I may say. But I am forgetting part of my mission. If you have

nothing else to do, will you come and eat your dinner with us, to-morrow. You are both great favourites of John's, and I was told specially to catch you if I could."

"We shall be delighted."

"No party, you know. A stray man or two, perhaps, if I happen to come across any that are pleasant. But, between you and I, my dear, that's not an every day occurrence, so there will very likely be only our four selves."

"And a very merry quartette we shall be, no doubt," cried Cissy, gaily.

"Of course, we shall. *Tête-à-tête* dinners are all very well, but one requires a little change sometimes, though you mustn't admit it as yet. Good-bye," and with a laughing little nod, Mrs. Paynter took her departure.

Apparently that lady's wanderings had been unsuccessful, for the next night saw her dining-table laid for four. But when

her husband returned, just in time to dress, he dashed into his wife's room, and exclaimed,

"Asked a fellow to dinner, Lizzie, just send word to 'em to lay another place, will you?"

"You shall be obeyed, my lord," replied Mrs. Paynter, as she turned to give the necessary instructions to her maid. "Who is it, John?"

"Only Brine, the fellow we met at Gore's wedding, you know. I ran against him to-day, and he said he hadn't seen them since they came back—didn't know they were back, in fact—so I said he had better come and meet them here to-night."

"I am sorry you asked him here," replied his wife slowly.

"Why? he's a friend of Montague's. If he didn't admire that costume as much as he ought, it's hardly sufficient reason for objecting to him," rejoined her husband, laughing.

"It is a very good and sufficient reason, Sir," said Mrs. Paynter. "To have overlooked that dress showed a want of sense of the beautiful. He must be a gross, material, male creature. No, stop one moment, John. Listen, I have been improving my mind lately. I have been reading, and this is what one of our greatest writers says, 'Dress is so essential a thing in the mind of a woman, that no man who cares about women ought to disdain critical study of it.'"

"Well, my dear, it's getting high time you attended to it, or you'll not stand criticizing to-night. I'm off."

"As a man always is when he gets the worst of an argument," cried Lizzie.

But John Paynter detested cold soup, and vanished. He understood his wife well, and she was right when she said no one else did. Lizzie had better stuff in her than the world gave her credit for.

It was a very merry dinner that. Those

little dinners are so charming. Where the ball of conversation is kicked around, and all the table are players—and, moreover, fair players. Where intimacy exists among the *convives*, and there is no noted talker to oppress their spirits. I have always thought one of the funniest things ever beheld must have been the meeting of those two famous professors of the monologue, Madame de Staël and Coleridge—according to tradition, it was like a two-year old race at Newmarket. The poet jumped off with the lead, and the lady never was in it. She never could get a word in. I suppose it all depended upon who spoke first, and Madame, as a lady, must have had the choice of taking the initiative. I don't believe she ever forgave herself for the mistake, and it is pretty evident that she never felt friendly to Coleridge afterwards.

"And the first lion thought the last a bore,"

is a burlesque line, with much meaning in it.

But Lizzie bends her head to Mrs. Gore, and the ladies rise. She stops for a second as she passes her husband, and whispers in his ear,

"Well, Sir, am I not fit to be looked at now?" then, before he could reply, she exclaimed aloud, "Now, gentlemen, don't sit all night over your wine. I'm going to be Bohemian, to-night, and let you light cigars in my drawing-room. Have coffee there, John?"

"Of course, order it in half an hour, and tell Bindon to let us know."

"Deuced glad to meet you, to-night, Fox," said Gore, as the ladies left the room. "I was coming down to see you, to-morrow, if I hadn't run against you so providentially. An inspiration of yours, Paynter, asking him here. The fact is, I want you to go down to Nottingham for me. I am so far in arrears with work myself, that I cannot spare the time. You've nothing particular to do, have you?"

"Well, I'm busy. I don't mean but what it could stand over a bit," returned Brine. "Still, I have got a plot of a three volume novel on the stocks that, I think, will be a success. I haven't quite worked it out yet, but I have got it pretty clearly, and was going at it this next fortnight."

"If you've really started to write, I've no more to say. I know what interrupting a literary man is, when he has regularly collared his subject."

"No, I've not exactly began. I've just mapped out the first volume. I can't say I've fairly laid down to it. Rather a good idea, Montie, though, I'll just tell it you. I should like to know what you fellows think of it. Man marries early in life, and his widow—"

"Halloa! stop! what becomes of the man?"

"D——n it, how should I know? Dies, of course, cholera, railroads, anything. Petty details are the sin of small novelists. Well,

his widow marries again. He has a child, and she has a child."

"They had two children, is the usual way of expressing it," remarked Gore.

"What a fool you are. Of course, her child is by the first marriage, and his also."

"But we know nothing about him."

"How should you? You're not intended to till the end of the second volume."

"But oughtn't we to know about his previous marriage?" inquired John Paynter.

"God bless my soul, no. Everything depends upon your being kept in ignorance of that. Well, the boy and girl being brought up with no knowledge of each other, fall in love."

"But how the deuce are they to fall in love if they've no knowledge of each other?" demanded Gore.

"Really," remarked Brine, with the utmost serenity. "It is hopeless to explain the salient points of a plot to two fellows

like you. I volunteer a sketch, and you demand a photograph. They've no knowledge of their connectionship, of course. Well, just as things are getting unpleasant all round, the rejected lover who has made a large fortune in America turns up."

"But we've never heard of him as yet," exclaims Gore.

"Of course you haven't. How could you? He doesn't appear till this stage of the story. One would think you expected to find it all in the preface. Real art, Sir, is to spring your effects like a mine."

"How did he make his fortune?" asked John Paynter sententiously.

"There you go again! details, details, always details. Men who paint landscapes don't paint miniatures. The best likenesses of Oliver Cromwell were not those which particularized his warts. How should I know how he made his wealth. Went gold-digging, or pig-sticking, or some-

thing. I tell you he made his fortune."

"I give in," returned Gore laughing. "Go on, Fox."

"Oh, it's no use going on," replied that gentleman. "If you're not in the profession you can't understand these things. Any fellow that wrote would comprehend it all in a second. Never mind. Now Montie, let's have your plot, or hear what you want done. Do you wish me to once more interview the peripatetic Turbottle? He is the great fact left in my mind connected with Nottingham."

"No, never mind him. But you know I told you some time back that I had a tangled skein to unravel. I want to find the relatives of a certain Mark Hemsworth, and I fancy from what I hear, that they are to be discovered in Nottinghamshire."

"Why, that was your wife's name," said Brine.

"Yes; and it's her late husband's family I want to get hold of. I have a strong belief that she had a marriage-settlement, though as yet I have found neither the deed nor the trustees. Now her father, who has vanished altogether, is probably one, but search for him seems hopeless. One has no idea where to begin, supposing that he is still alive. But the other trustee might perhaps be one of the Hemsworth people, or at all events they might know something concerning the affair. If I am right in my conjecture, the settlement, if settlement there were, was on property in this country, and I'll tell you why." And then Gore related to his companions the slender data upon which he had founded his conclusion.

Brine listened attentively, and when the narrator finished, exclaimed,

"I'll go in for this, Montie. I think doing detective will be rather good fun, and ought to lead to some striking situations."

"Such as being pitched out of windows," chimed in John Paynter.

"You have no taste for dramatic art, Sir," rejoined Brine, "or you wouldn't imagine that I could lend myself to such a coarse farcical incident."

"Tell us whether you think it farcical when you get to the bottom," grinned Mr. Paynter.

"You don't understand the natural tact with which your obedient servant is gifted," continued Brine, scarce heeding the interruption. "I'll cross-examine Nottinghamshire as if I was a revising barrister. Montie, my boy, I have acted in the 'Scrap of Paper.' We'll make a glorious drama out of this note-book incident. Superb! By Jove! I feel it simmering in my brain already. It will haunt my pillow. Consider the thing done. I'll find a dozen Hemsworths, and the difficulty shall be to discover which is the right one. Don't you think that would be a point, eh?"

"If you'd think of my wife's interests, and not of an imaginary drama, I should call it a point," rejoined Gore.

"Of course," said the imperturbable Brine. "But Mrs. Gore's interests and the play-going public's are one upon this occasion. Don't be afraid, Montie, I'm not quite a fool if I am imaginative. I'll ferret out what you want, and discover Hemsworth's relations if he has any."

"Well, now let up go up-stairs to coffee," said the host.

"At last, Mr. Gore," exclaimed Lizzie, as they entered the drawing-room. "What I should call a very liberal rendering of half-an-hour. Nonsense! no apology, of course I'm jesting," she continued as Montague showed symptoms of pleading extenuating circumstances. "I am only too glad you found John's wine decent; you know of old that I like my guests to be happy in their own way, and that the greatest compliment you can pay me is

to let me see you've passed a pleasant evening. Now come and talk to me. I want to investigate you in your new character."

"Want to see what a wife's done for me," returned Gore laughing, as he dropped into an easy-chair next his hostess.

"Light your cigar. You see John has. And then you can talk as if you were not married."

Now a quintette is sometimes a very awkward number should the conversation cease to be general, and the party not be all intimates.

Mrs. Paynter's drawing-room was destined to furnish an example of this. The hostess has settled down to a pleasant *tête-à-tête* with Montague Gore. Cissy and John Paynter would probably have done likewise, but Brine, in self-defence, was compelled to make a third in their conversation. He was the discord in that trio. Brine was a thorough man of the world, and

could talk fluently on most topics, and yet it would seem as if he had "agreed to disagree" with his two companions about everything. He was wont to be rather dogmatic in his opinions, a failing always irritating to women, should you differ from them, because they also are generally strongly wedded to their ideas. James Smith used to assert that his politics were always the same as those of the lady he took down to dinner. It is good to modify one's opinions in like manner. Brine was also given to live more amongst men than in general society; a not uncommon result of which is the loss of that habit of deference to their remarks, so much appreciated by all women. Certain it was that Cissy and he conceived a mutual dislike for one another upon this, one may say, their first time of meeting, for except at her wedding Brine had never seen his friend's wife. John Paynter, too, was conscious that the talk was somehow spoiled, and not altogether to Mrs. Gore's

taste, and characterized Mr. Brine to his wife afterwards as an "argumentative cuss."

That gentleman, as he wended his way leisurely home to the Temple, shook his head, and hoped Montie Gore might not some day think he had better have remained unmarried.

CHAPTER VI.

CHARLIE DETFIELD'S AFFAIRS.

BELIEF in himself, is one of those things without which a man never achieves anything. "*Il faut se faire valoir*," ought to be inscribed on every young man's banner. It by no means follows that such belief is not misplaced, but it is so much better to hold as a creed than mistrust in one's abilities, that I cannot help thinking conceit to be by no means a bad stock in trade for a man in the commencement of his career. Of course it may be overdone, but the world so very soon corrects that

fault, while the other—ah! have we not all seen men's lives marred by that other; as Hazlitt said, "the apprentice who did not think he would one day be Lord Mayor was bound to be hung."

Fox Brine had never achieved anything, but there never was a man who believed more implicitly in himself. He was quite convinced that whenever he had time to finish off these dramas, or novels, that he conceived with a prolificness utterly bewildering to his friends, he should awake like Byron and find himself famous. But, somehow, he never did find time. It is, perhaps, a little astonishing, but those who succeed in such things, always do find time.

Mr. Brine emerges from his bath, radiant as the sun god, the morning after his dinner at Mrs. Paynter's, ready to write, to argue, to do, or to die. He jots down a few ideas for a buffo song, as he continues his toilet, and is not without an inspiration concerning

a prologue for some amateur theatricals, to which he stands pledged. Thinks indeed he will knock off that prologue after breakfast. He is always going to knock off something after breakfast, but complains that he never can get a minute to himself. Still he feels in the vein this morning, and really an hour will be sufficient to carry out that intention. Meantime some devilled kidneys and an anchovy, followed by the sedative of a pipe, is just the preparation that a man who means work would naturally prescribe for himself.

The meal satisfactorily disposed of, the pipe fairly under way, and Mr. Brine puts out his writing materials. He traces the word prologue in bold large characters at the top of a sheet, and then sits looking contemplatively at it, smoking placidly while he does so. Somehow, those ideas which came so easily to him in his bath, all seem to have evaporated now that he has a pen in his hand.

"Most courteous friends, I make my bow before you,

Hang it, that won't do. It doesn't sound original. Besides, 'bore you' is the only rhyme I can think of just now. Suppose we shall, but it'll never do to tell 'em so to start with. Extraordinary thing, inspiration; I lost the thread while I was peppering that second kidney. To think that a mere kidney might suppress a poem.

"Oh, gracious friends, who grace our play to-night,

'put to flight,' 'bite,' no, that won't do. Very curious, my rhythmical powers are usually of a high order. The fount of song seems dried within me this morning.

"Oh, stalls and boxes, pit and gallery, hail!
We come before you with a favouring gale.

That's startling, if not quite connected.

"Our dramatic craft has got the wind abaft her,
Her sails are bellying out with tears and laughter.

That's a good bold simile if they only understand it. Quite Dibdinesque in the turn of

expression. The devil of it is, it don't seem to lead to anything. Perhaps if I took a turn, ideas would flow again." So saying, Mr. Brine rose from his seat and walked up and down his room a little. Then he stopped, looked out of the window, and became interested in an altercation between a pot-boy and a solicitor's clerk, that was being conducted with considerable asperity in the courtyard below. Having seen this little difference satisfactorily adjusted, Mr. Brine indulged in some comments on the degeneracy of the English race. In his opinion, the clerk ought to have summarily chastised his opponent, "punched his head," I think was the way Mr. Brine put it to himself.

Then it occurred to him that he might as well knock off that prologue.

> "Laden we are with comedy and farce,
> Yourselves the custom-house we hope to pass."

"Hum!" mused the writer, as he added

the above couplet, "if those are not regular prologue lines, I don't know what are. They are neither common sense nor English, which is always a presumed hit in an amateur's prologue. I don't get on quite so quick as I might, but the composition of high class poetry involves labour; yes, and now I come to think of it, beer;" with which Mr. Brine winked pleasantly at his ink-stand, as if that article from long experience could quite enter in the joke, and then proceeded to shout for a myrmidon of some kind down the staircase. That individual at last appearing, and being despatched in search of the required refreshment, Fox Brine began once more to pace his chambers in pursuit of ideas.

Suddenly there was a sharp tap at the door, to which, deeming it to herald the return of his messenger, Brine without turning his head, briefly answered,

"Put it down!"

"Down it are!" replied Charlie Detfield, flinging himself into an arm-chair.

"Halloa! it's you, is it? By Jove, I'm hard at work, you know."

"Exactly, and getting awfully thirsty over it. I overtook the fellow with the tankard on the last landing, and it looked so cool and the stairs so steep, that I drained it to give me strength for the remainder of the ascent."

"You did?" said Brine, surveying his visitor. "If the beer was about half as cool as you, it must have gone down pleasantly."

Charlie nodded.

"Never mind, I sent him back for some more. I've come to have a talk with you."

"Fellows always do directly I sit down to work. I shall have to change my abode, and rent the top of the monument, or the diving-bell at the Polytechnic, or some other retired locality."

"Don't be edgy, Fox, I want to talk over my affairs a bit."

"All right," replied Brine, throwing himself full length on a sofa. "I am at your service, old fellow, to the extent of my abilities, all round you know. But, Charlie, we never do make anything out of it, when we talk over your difficulties, beyond the fact that you are dipped past redemption. By the way," he continued, philosophically, "it's very curious, but you never hear a prosperous man anxious to talk over his affairs with a friend. There'd be some comfort too in a discussion of that kind."

"Of course, you don't," retorted Charlie. "You don't see healthy men wishing to consult doctors, it's when we are ill we unburden ourselves of the history of our infirmities. Impecuniosity is my complaint, and I want advice."

"No you don't, Charlie, you want money; there's plenty of advice about, if that's any good to you."

"But advice leads to money sometimes. You prescribed for me the other day, you

know. Now it's very odd, but all the friends who are aware of how awfully hard up I am, give me the same advice'"

"What, to marry money?"

"Just so. I didn't take kindly to the idea at first, but desperate cases demand desperate remedies. I have made up my mind."

"Good! you are going in for an heiress?" remarked Brine, sententiously. "Now there's very often a terrible flaw in the advice your friends give you on that point. My prescription, I remember, was deficient in one necessary ingredient. People tell you to marry *an* heiress—that indefinite article is the devil. If they would point out *the* heiress."

"I can't complain on that point. The lady has been indicated. I have been properly introduced. I am making love to her now," rejoined the guardsman, languidly.

"You are?" said Brine, eyeing him

keenly. "If you don't throw a little more steam into talking to her than you do into talking of her, I wouldn't take twenty to one about your chance, my boy."

"We are only in the early stage of courtship at present," replied Charlie, speaking as tranquilly as if he was talking of something in which he had no personal concern. "It would never do to frighten the old lady by being too demonstrative."

"Ah! she's a little old, is she? What do you call old now?"

"Well, you see, I don't know her age exactly. Mrs. Paynter vows she's old enough to be my mother, but that's libel. You know how women talk. She's a good bit older than me though."

"Of course, if you go for money, you can't have everything. By the way, I dare say you met Mrs. Gore before her marriage."

"Yes, two or three times, when she was

Mrs. Hemsworth. She was a good deal at the Paynters."

"What did you think of her, Charlie?"

"I thought her a particularly agreeable, graceful woman. I should fancy Gore a fortunate man in his wife."

"I'm glad you think so. He's a very dear friend of mine. Should have been something nearer, as you of course know. But I can't say I did fancy Mrs. Gore when I met her the other night. However, that's neither here nor there, and I hope I'm all wrong in the opinion I formed of her."

"I hav'nt a doubt of it. She's as pleasant a woman to talk to as I ever met, and I am not quite sure whether she isn't a very handsome one to boot; I know if ever I thought she wasn't, I always recanted after talking to her for five minutes. Did you ever make out anything about Major Jenkens for me?"

"No;" replied Brine, with considerable animation. "The Major is dark—very

dark. I have talked to a good many people regarding him. That he's a rather shy lot, I've no doubt, but I can't pick up anything tangible about him. There are men who abuse him freely, and hint that he has been guilty of all sorts of enormities; but when you come to go into particulars, they can only whisper mysterious accounts of his having now and then won goodish stakes at play, and that he is well-known to the bill-discounters. Sharp practitioner they call him, but nobody seems able to allege any instance of peculiarly sharp practice on his part. That he's a bird of prey, I think probable, but at all events he does his ravening decorously. Don't understand his taking such an interest in your marrying, Charlie."

"Nor I. He certainly never lent me money, but of course he may be a partner in the transaction. He told me who to go to, but affects to have nothing to do with it. Professes simply to buy and sell on commission anything, houses, horses,

carriages, white elephants or white mice. You've seen him, I think you said?"

"Yes; two or three times in the Park, the other afternoon only."

"Was he wearing spectacles?" asked Charlie, laughing.

"No, certainly not. Does he sometimes?"

"Yes; and I'd almost bet you a sovereign you wouldn't know him when thus decorated. I never saw a man that it made such a difference to. I don't believe the old villain wants them at all, and when he has got 'em on I defy you to make anything out of his face."

"It didn't strike me as a face you would make much out of any way," rejoined Brine, meditatively. "But as far as he bears on your affairs, there is no more to be said at present. I should like to know something more about this wooing of yours."

"It goes on smoothly and tranquilly. I pay my visits in Barnsbury Park when-

ever I am not on duty, or specially engaged."

"And you find you progress favourably with the old—beg pardon, I mean *the* lady."

"Yes, I assure you she's a very nice person. I like her immensely. Very pleasant to talk to. She suits me admirably in every respect, bar one."

"And that is?"

"Well, she'd make such a charming aunt or mother-in-law, it seems a pity that necessity compels me to make her a wife. I could get so fond of her from any other point of view. But what must be, must, I suppose."

"You find it rather hard work, I presume, then!" exclaimed Brine, laughing.

"Not at all, as I said before; she is remarkably pleasant. Then the elder sister is extremely amusing—quite a character—and as for the niece! Bessie Stanbury is simply charming. You never saw such a

sweet girl, Fox. Her figure is perfect, and her eyes simply swim in their own loveliness," concluded Charlie, after a short pause.

"Halloa! I say this won't do, you know!" exclaimed Brine, springing up from his sofa. "We know perfectly well what the result is in all comedies, when a man makes love to the aunt, and a bewitching niece appears upon the scene. My dear Charlie, if this is your idea of going in for money, you won't make much of the speculation."

"By Jove! you should see her on horseback, old fellow. She can sit her horse, and never looks better than she does in her riding-habit."

"I have no doubt Miss Bessie Stanbury is all you describe her; but it strikes me you are making a fool of yourself," said Brine, gravely. "Under the delusion that you are laying siege to the aunt, it looks as if you were falling over head and ears in love with

the niece. That's not whist, Charlie."

"Pooh! nonsense; I know what I am about," rejoined Detfield, pettishly. "Of course I must talk to the girl when she is present. Besides, it is not forbidden, even when married, to admire a pretty woman when you meet one—much less when you are only going to be."

"If you don't confine your admiration to the woman you seek to marry, it's odds she is never your bride, Master Charlie. You don't suppose the aunt will approve of your making sheeps' eyes at the niece, do you? and you can't be such a fool as to suppose a woman will overlook *that?*"

"Never you mind, Fox;" replied Detfield, lazily. "It's no use your preaching. Depend upon it, if a man can't manage to win a woman himself, no male creature can teach him the trick of it. Besides, Miles Standish always made a great impression on me. I determined long ago never to ask masculine

help in my wooing. It's awkward when the lady makes response to such assistance with, 'Why don't you speak for yourself, John.' You leave me to manage my own affairs."

"Why, you ungrateful beggar!" exclaimed Brine, bursting into a roar of laughter. "That's the way of the world all over. You come here bothering for advice, and wind up by requesting I'll leave you to manage your own affairs. It's too absurd."

"So it is;" replied Charlie, joining in the laugh against himself, "and we have arrived at the old conclusion, as you said we should, to wit 'that I am past redemption,' further than that we never get. I tell you what, old fellow, the luxury of talking 'em over with a sympathetic friend is just the one pull of being in difficulties."

"Hear him!" cried Brine. "The serene philosophy of a virtuous nature that—

"'Sees sermons in stones and good in everything.'

One o'clock, by Jove! I must put up my traps. I'm off to Nottingham this afternoon on business."

"Pack away," observed Charlie, placidly. "I'll look on."

Brine's arrangements were soon made, and the myrmidon despatched for a cab. As the two friends shook hands, Brine paused for a moment, and then said,

"This is not advice, Charlie, but prophecy. Mark me, you'll marry the wrong lady."

"What of those two?"

"Of those two. Of course, I speak with regard to your difficulties."

"Exactly. I'll bet you five pounds I don't."

"Done!" replied Brine; and his goodbye was lost in the rattle of the hansom's wheels.

CHAPTER VII.

WHO DOES HE COME TO SEE?

CHARLIE DETFIELD, as may be easily surmised, has paid a good many visits to Barnsbury Park lately. He has moreover contrived to meet Bessie on several occasions in her rides, and has substituted a neat hack for the unfortunate bicycle—his "first attempt at economy," as he observes pathetically, "crushed beneath the wheels of the people's Juggernaut." Miss Bessie, who detests street cars, instigated thereto in some measure by Velvet's disdain of those vehicles, vows that expres-

sion is most poetical. But that young lady is scarce to be counted a fair judge of Charlie Detfield's sayings and doings just now. She has met him too at more than one dinner and dance, contrived by the sagacious Roxby with a view of throwing the young couple together. Charlie no longer despises invitations beyond that famous outpost "the Angel."

"It is his duty to continue his pursuit of Aunt Clem," he says to himself. "That Bessie should always figure at these entertainments under her wing is a coincidence. Coincidences have considerable effect on our lives, but people never realize nor dream how they themselves contribute to coincidences."

Although Detfield invariably paid Aunt Clem great attention, it cannot be supposed that Bessie attached much significance to that. What tact he had, she thought, thus to propitiate her chaperone; and Miss Clementina, pleased as she was at the

studied courtesies of the young guardsman only deemed them an indirect tribute to her pretty niece.

If Aunt Clem did not consider that her dancing days were over, and that matrimonial chances were not as yet altogether beyond her attainment, still she had never pictured a man of Charlie Detfield's years, as an aspirant to her hand. If the elder Misses Stanbury were not so rich as their niece, yet they had a comfortable ten thousand pounds a piece, and Aunt Clem did know that there were middle-aged men about who would consider that and a good-natured woman of her years a most desirable acquisition.

But Captain Detfield's frequent visits began to attract the attention of Miss Matilda. She liked the young guardsman dropping in with his light lively gossip. He always paid her a deference, which impressed her very favourably towards him. Suddenly the idea flashed across Miss Matilda,

"What does he mean by all this continuous calling? Young gentlemen of his age don't come twice a week or so to see a lady of my years, be she ever so lively," and Aunt Matilda considered that she *could* talk, although such frivolous conversation as held sway when Charlie Detfield was in the drawing-room was rather beneath her. "Now which was it? that giddy-minded sister of hers, or the child, that was the attraction." Miss Matilda always regarded Aunt Clem as a flighty woman, who ought to be slightly ashamed of herself for her caprices. Not too old to marry, by any means, but who ought really to think of giving up dancing, and so on. As for Bessie, she persistently looked upon her as a girl too young for any man to think seriously about, but she had observed, she thought, a levity about Captain Detfield that made it just possible he might be amusing himself by flirting with the child.

Miss Matilda conceived that it was her

duty to clear up all doubts on the subject forthwith.

"The sooner the better;" she said to herself, "unpleasantness, if it's going to be unpleasantness, like meat in hot weather, gets very very unpleasant the longer you keep it."

At five o'clock tea that day, she opened her battery.

"Young women," she observed, "though to call a chit like you a young woman, Bessie, is a moral absurdity, I want to know who it is that Captain Detfield comes here to see?"

"I suppose all of us," replied Aunt Clem, laughing. "Give me some more sugar, Bessie."

"Do you? then I regret to say, Clementina, you're a fool. He doesn't come here to see ME."

"You're not polite, and you are not all of us," rejoined Aunt Clem, flushing slightly.

"You think he comes to see you then?" inquired Miss Matilda, sharply.

"I have never thought at all about it, and most assuredly never that," returned Miss Clementina.

If her aunt had flushed, Bessie Stanbury had felt that she was becoming scarlet all over at Miss Matilda's abrupt interrogatories. But the youngest women are cunning of fence, when you touch upon their affections. She turned her head after a second or two, and said demurely, the little hypocrite,

"Well, Aunt Clem, I think you ought to take this into consideration. He *does* pay you a deal of attention, you know."

There was a merry twinkle in Miss Clementina's eyes, as she replied with great solemnity.

"Now I reflect upon it, he does. Matilda is convinced that she is not the attraction. Bessie seems to think I am. I suppose then it is me, that he comes to see."

"Good heavens! Clementina, and thinking that, what do you mean to do?" inquired Miss Matilda, breathlessly.

"It is a very difficult question to answer. I really don't know. I should like to know what you both think, for at present nothing occurs to me, beyond being always glad to see him; and, terrible to confess though it may be, I am."

"What—you think of marrying that boy?" shrieked Miss Matilda.

"He's not a boy exactly," observed Bessie, laughing.

"And, oh dear! he hasn't asked me yet," exclaimed Miss Clementina, with an arch glance at Bessie. "Do you think he will?"

"Yes, I do," retorted that young lady, "and he won't take no for an answer, Aunt Clem, and you'll not give him No to take, that's another thing, and mind I will be a bridesmaid."

"You won't, my dear," cried Aunt Clem,

throwing herself back in her chair, and indulging in a peal of laughter.

"Clementina, your conduct is positively indecent," said Miss Matilda, drawing herself up in her most stately manner, and how stately she could be, when irritated, was scarcely to be conceived. Nothing ever did exasperate the good lady so much as a dim idea that a joke was being carried on at her expense.

"What!" replied Miss Clementina, recovering her gravity, "because I am reflecting what answer I am to give to an important question."

"It must be entirely your own fault, if a boy like that presumes to ask such a question," retorted Miss Stanbury, sniffing with indignation.

Aunt Clem stole a sly look at her niece as she said,

"But young men in these days are so presuming. Are they not, Bessie?"

"It's not much to be wondered at, when

the girls are so forward. When I came out—don't laugh you chit, do you suppose I was born two-and-forty—young men paid us attention, but I see the young ladies of the present day have reversed all that. I'm sure at our dance I saw two or three young women who had put themselves in their partner's place on that score. I suppose next I shall find that you and Bessie are paying attention to somebody or other."

"Aunt! aunt! what a shameful libel!" cried the girl. "You have no right to heap up fresh charges without any foundation, in this manner."

"Thank you for the hint," replied Miss Stanbury, drily, "we *have* rather wandered from the point. The question is, who Captain Detfield comes here specially to see. It's not me, and much as I regret to wound Clementina's vanity, I'm not altogether clear that it's her."

Bessie repented her interference, and hung

out palpable signals of distress at this unexpected change of Miss Stanbury's views. That lady, though she had been carried away for the moment, was much too shrewd to be long deceived by her niece's joke. She was indignant at the presumption of the pair, in attempting to mystify her for a moment, and disposed to punish the delinquents, for one of whom, at all events, she had a rod ready to her hand.

"Pray," she continued, turning abruptly to her niece, "whom do you suppose to be the loadstone that attracts Captain Detfield to Barnsbury Park, eh, Miss?"

But Aunt Clem came gallantly to the rescue, and took the answer to that question upon herself.

"My dear Matilda, she has told you already that I am the loadstone. Goodness! I thought we settled that some time back. The question was, what was I to say to my admirer if he ventured to propose."

"The question rather is what you can

have said to induce him to take such a liberty," retorted Miss Stanbury, so fiercely that her sister began to think that the joke had been carried a little too far.

"Don't be angry, Matilda," rejoined Aunt Clem, in pleading tones. "Let us suppose it is Bessie."

"No, pray don't," exclaimed the girl, blushing. "You have no right to suppose so. I have no right to think so. Captain Detfield has said no word to me as yet that would justify me in such belief. Don't be cruel, Aunt Matilda," continued Bessie, springing suddenly from her chair, and coiling herself up at her aunt's feet. "You never tease me, you know, and you are doing so now. It's not fair. I don't like it, and," she added, as she fondled Miss Stanbury's hand, looking up into her face with a mutinous pout, "I won't bear it."

Miss Matilda's face softened, as she stroked the girl's shining tresses.

"There's plenty of love made that's unspoken, my dear," she replied, after a short pause. "And young ladies, for the most part, bear it very patiently, even when it is, although may be by the wrong man. None of our sex ever were, or ever will be indifferent to a love-tale, even though our sympathies should not be with the teller. Bessie, my pet, I think you will tell your old Aunt when the right man speaks, be he who he may. Now run away, child, I want to talk to Clementina, and not to you."

Bessie's sole reply was to give her Aunt a great hug, two or three kisses, leave a tear on her cheek, and vanish.

But if Miss Stanbury had melted momentarily to her niece, it was not to be supposed that austere lady was altogether pacified. Ashamed a little at her own momentary weakness to Bessie, she resolved to give way to nothing of the kind with her sister.

"Well, Clementina!" she remarked, with

the sharpness of a detonating pistol, as the door closed. "What have you got to say?"

"Nothing," replied Aunt Clem, meekly.

"Nothing! and you have allowed this to go on under your eyes all the time, and tell me you've nothing to say. Here's Bessie as good as engaged; pooh! don't tell me," she cried, as Aunt Clem made a deprecatory gesture, "when a girl blushes, as she did just now, at the man's name, he's only to ask and to have, did he but know it. It's to be hoped he don't. Now we know literally nothing of this Captain Detfield. Military morals I believe to be of the most unsatisfactory description. Officers, usually, I have heard, are addicted to all manner of unrighteousness. I don't profess to know much about them, but I have no reason to think that the Household Brigade, to which Captain Detfield says he belongs, are more piously brought up than the others, horse, foot, or artillery."

And having so said, Miss Stanbury sat bolt upright, and glared defiantly at her unfortunate sister. She was speaking the exact truth concerning the army, according to her own lights. She did know nothing about them, and looked upon them all as wine-bibbers, libertines, &c.

Miss Clementina bore her sister's attack in silence. That Detfield admired her niece, and paid her considerable attention, she was aware, but that anything serious was likely to come of it had never before entered her head. She felt dreadfully guilty, as if she had neglected a trust confided to her care. They did know next to nothing of Captain Detfield—it was too true. Again, was Bessie's heart out of her own keeping already, as Miss Matilda asserted. She began to fear it was so.

"I can't help it," she murmured, at length. "I never thought of his caring for Bessie, in that way, and I couldn't inquire into the history of every young man who

asked the child to dance, or handed her down to dinner."

"But when you saw her perpetually dancing with one young man, I presume you might have made inquiries about him."

"I'm sure I don't know who from. I declare I don't know who to ask about him now. I haven't the least idea of how to make inquiries about Captain Detfield! I can think of nothing but writing to the Colonel of his regiment, and I don't suppose that would do," rejoined Aunt Clem, somewhat dolefully. "Besides he dances a good deal with me."

"I dare say. If you observe, you will notice young men usually are very attentive to their intended mothers-in-law," retorted Miss Stanbury, spitefully.

But flesh and blood could not stand this inuendo. Aunt Clem started to her feet, and with flushed cheeks, exclaimed,

"I'll not stay here to be insulted, Matilda.

I suppose it's not too late to make inquiries about Captain Detfield, even now. Besides, you began by asking who he comes here to see."

"True. Sit down, Clementina, and let's talk the thing over quietly," interposed Miss Stanbury, who saw that she had gone too far. "We must get somebody to ascertain all about Captain Detfield's family and prospects, for us. Bessie's guardian is, of course, the proper person. I shall send for Mr. Roxby."

"Yes, that will do nicely," replied Miss Clementina, much mollified, "but there's a wide distinction between aunts and mothers-in-law, I'd have you to know. *I* never saw a young man dancing with his mother-in-law, though, perhaps, you may," and so saying, Aunt Clem swept out of the room, with a dignified rustle of the skirts most unusual.

Miss Stanbury made no reply, but could

not refrain from indulging in a grim smile, as she saw how her shot had told. Verily, it was the old *habet* of the arena.

CHAPTER VIII.

A FATAL KISS.

CISSY has made her appointment, and the morning has arrived on which she is to keep it. That she is fluttered and excited about this meeting is only natural. She has never known a soul in whom she could place implicit reliance, from the time her father so mysteriously vanished until she married Montague Gore. She is just beginning to think she can do so in him. To feel that his presence is a protection from all ills in this world. She murmurs to herself at times, "I feel so safe now Montague

has charge of me. If I did get into a scrape he would pull me through it." It is an immense thing for a woman, who has known what it is to want a protector, to find herself once more in safe anchorage. To feel that there is someone to take care of her—someone on whom she can thoroughly depend. He may not inspire any feeling of love, but he must of esteem and gratitude, and these Cissy had most thoroughly conceived for her husband.

True, Mrs. Paynter had been a great friend to her—really the one friend of her own sex she had ever known, but no woman can ever stand to another in the light of a protector, even though she be her own mother. It is the prerogative of man, although there is a section of sexless women who apparently do not think so. That third sex, "the Lady Mary Montagues," have always existed, but I think they must have been pleasanter in the days gone by than they are in the present, if one may

judge by their recorded sayings and doings.

Cissy has selected Montague Square for her interview. She does not know anything about it, further than that it appears to her to be always deserted. There are certain spots in London which one might almost presume to be uninhabited. Montague Square is one of these. The dwellers therein seem to leave and regain their homes in stealthy and mysterious fashion, and are never seen to take exercise in their own square. Cissy has merely noticed that it appeared to be a quiet place, that it had the advantage of being near her own home. She has no thought concerning herself in this respect, but she does look upon it that her father must have strong reasons for not wishing to be recognised, though what those reasons may be still puzzles her considerably. She did not understand his note on that point one iota. At the bottom of her

heart she thought he had been very cruel to leave her all these years. How many times she had wanted him, he could never know. But her belief in him was unbounded, and he doubtless had good cause for his apparent desertion.

Her husband has gone off to his chambers, and Cissy sallies forth to her appointment arrayed in the latest Parisian mode. One of those women with whom to dress well is as a thing of course. Like Marie Stuart, Cissy would have been dressed becomingly if treading the path to the scaffold. She understood economy little in any shape, but as regards her personal attire, not at all. She had been always taught not only to be well-dressed, but strikingly well-dressed. To accomplish that requires a good deal of money. But Cissy would have conceived her husband infinitely more entitled to find fault with her appearance than her milliner's bill. An idea born of her first marriage, but which a husband of

more limited income, and with certain scruples as regards exceeding it, might be apt to demur to.

Montague Gore has already had a slight revelation on this point, but Cissy knows well that, sooner or later, she will have to bring accounts for his settlement of this nature that will open his eyes considerably. She does not trouble her head much about it as yet. She does not know whether he will care much when she does. These moderate means that he alludes to are so very vague. Some people call themselves paupers on ten thousand a year; but that a husband must wish his wife to be well-dressed is a fixed fact in Cissy's creed. "Well, that cannot be without some expense," reflects Mrs. Gore. "It is unfortunate, but my style does require good things. Little women can do with cheap materials. I can't."

Mrs. Gore's lesser sisters would have probably felt considerable wrath had they

known her sentiments. No woman that lives ever considered herself unfitted for rich attire ; but Cissy kept her opinions on dress locked within her own bosom, which, when you have conceived heterodox notions, is undoubtedly the most judicious thing to do. Usually we are anxious to promulgate them, and what very hot water we find ourselves in by so doing.

She arrives at Montague Square, and has scarcely traversed one side of it before the well-knit figure she knows so well approaches her. The Major has no spectacles on upon this occasion. For once in a way, the veteran has lost sight of doing what he conceives his duty by his neighbour, and is fairly and honestly entrapped into genuine emotion. Midst the sullen, solitary life of plunder he habitually leads, this is the one soft spot, the one human affection he cherishes. For Cissy, he has made the one stupendous sacrifice of his life. For her he has triumphed over that innate

selfishness characteristic of love of all kinds. She thinks he was cruel to desert her. She little knows what it cost him—how long he wavered and pondered over this, to him, terrible step, before he determined upon it. "But no," he thought at length, "she is well and fairly launched upon the world, she shall not have a questionable father flying in her face." None knew better than Major Jenkens how quietly but bitterly society can allude to doubtful relations or antecedents.

But they have met, and the Major clasping Cissy's two hands in his own, gazes anxiously into her face, as he exclaims,

"I see you once more, my darling! Well, happy—is it so?"

"Why did you leave me, father, all these years? What had your child done that you should treat her so cruelly? No," she continued hurriedly, noticing the troubled expression of his face, "I don't mean that

exactly. Of course you had good reasons, but it came hard, you know, on me. I knew nothing."

"No, nor I either, Cissy," he replied hoarsely. "I never guessed I had married you to a blackguard. Nay, don't interrupt," he went on, as his daughter made a slight deprecatory gesture. "I don't want to pain you by abuse of Mark Hemsworth. You know what he was, as well as I do."

"He was my husband," interposed Cissy gently.

"True, we'll allude to him no more," replied the Major, as they passed slowly along the pavement. "First, I want to know whether you are happy in this second marriage. Is Gore kind to you, child?"

"Yes, and more than that, considerate. I am his wife. I was Mark Hemsworth's plaything. Ah! there is such a difference. He loves me so, it is a shame I cannot care

more for him. I suppose it is not in my nature. Books tell me that women love once at least, but I don't think that hour will come to me, at least, not as I have pictured it to myself. I like him, I esteem him, but," said Cissy, dropping her voice, "I sometimes wish he would never kiss me."

"But why, child, there is surely nothing repulsive in the kiss of one we only like."

"I can't tell you," she replied, blushing, "further than I feel I have no answering kiss to give him back. I was honest with him, father, I told him I had but liking to give, and he said he could be content to wait till he could win more. I blame myself that he has not done so, but I cannot help it."

"And you were obliged to marry him, of course?"

"Yes, what else could I do? I was grateful to anyone who would take care of me. You know I had no choice. I am a

lucky woman to have fallen into the hands I have."

"But suppose, Cissy, it should turn out that you have a moderate fortune of your own. What then?"

"I should be very glad for my own sake and Montague's. I don't know what his income is, and I don't like to ask him; but I am afraid I am spending more than he will quite like. I know he has an idea that I have a marriage-settlement of some kind from Mark, if he could find out about it—he always said you would be sure to know," and Cissy looked a little inquisitively into her father's face.

"You have," he rejoined, shortly, "I do know all about it, and it is not gone in the general crash. I took care of you in that respect. It was tied up quite beyond Mark Hemsworth's control, and is on land in England."

"I am so glad," cried Cissy. "So pleased to think that Montague will find

I have not come to him empty-handed after all."

The Major paused for some few moments before he replied. To have a pull over his fellows was so incorporated with his very nature, that it was not in him to relinquish it all at once, even though Cissy might desire it.

"Listen," he said, at length. "You can't suppose that I wish to defraud you of what is yours. The world calls me hard names—many, because I perceive and take advantage of its weaknesses and selfishness. Unscrupulous is, perhaps, one of the mildest epithets they attach to me. They have good reason. I don't stand at trifles when it is to serve my own ends. I am not likely to flinch when it is to serve your interests. I prefer to keep all knowledge of this property of yours to myself for the present. I mistook Hemsworth; let us wait and see how this new husband of yours turns out."

"I can trust him thoroughly," cried Cissy, proudly, as she reared her head. "He may never win my heart, if I have such a thing, but I believe implicitly in his honour and rectitude. Montague would never ill-treat me—would scorn to make away with any money of mine."

"My dear," returned the Major, drily, "if you don't love your husband, you are in a very fair way to do so."

"I am nothing of the sort," returned Cissy, with flushed cheeks. "I wish I were. But I can't imagine him doing anything mean."

"No," replied her father, sententiously, "perhaps not. I have lived longer than you and know what flaws there are in the finest-looking diamonds, when tested. You can never quite calculate upon how a man will take getting into difficulties, for instance. Don't think, Cissy, I am insinuating for one instant that your husband is likely to do so. But I prefer to wait a little, and see

how you get on together, before I hand over this nest-egg of yours to his control. Remember, it is his to do what he likes with when he only knows of it."

"It shall be as you wish," replied Cissy, "though, I assure you, I have no doubt of Montague. I don't think it is fair quite for an extravagant wife, such as I am to him, to keep back any little property she may be possessed of."

"Ah! he calls you extravagant, eh?" rejoined the Major, as he peered curiously into her face.

"Not exactly that, but he did say the other day that there must be bounds to our expenditure."

"And you, no doubt, have a heavy milliner's bill or two, that you don't feel quite comfortable about handing over to him."

"I won't admit that altogether," returned Cissy, half laughing, yet with some increase of colour at the same time, "but I do wish they weren't quite so big."

"What! you have married a screw, then, this time, instead of a spendthrift?" inquired the Major, sharply.

"Indeed, I have done nothing of the kind," cried Cissy warmly; "but my husband has not so much money as Mark had, nor is he so reckless regarding it."

"You are learning what it is to be without money in your purse, my dear."

"Well, not exactly, but I am learning to feel the want of it; that is, I haven't so much to spend as I should like."

"Mrs. Hemsworth could have formed but little ideas of economy," observed the Major, musingly.

"Mrs. Hemsworth is dead," replied Cissy, pettishly, "and a very foolish, and rather unhappy person she was. I hope Mrs. Gore may be wiser, even though she be a little extravagant. But, father, I want to know why you have abandoned me all these years?"

"Humph!" replied the Major, as he carefully removed a piece of orange peel from the pavement with his walking-stick. "I will tell you. I have said they call me hard names. Gambler, leg, adventurer," he continued, bitterly, "with some amount of truth, it may be, but there are verier legs than I, who sit in high places, and move among the elect of the land. If you live by your wits, as it is termed, this stigma always attaches itself to you, unless you are registered in the red book. It was Sam Slick who said, for an out and out leg give me a lord who has made it his vocation. My darling," he went on, with softened voice, "I didn't wish that you should suffer for your father's sins. I had no wish that you should learn to blush when you heard him mentioned—to dread his appearance in your drawing-room."

"Do you think I could ever do that?" cried Cissy, as she passed her arm through his. "I don't care what you may have done

—if it was fifty times worse than anything you have hinted—to me, you are still the indulgent father who humoured my every childish whim, who never was unkind till, till he deserted me. You must never do so again," she added, with a slight sob, raising her moistened eyes to his.

"I think not," replied the Major, caressing the hand that laid within his arm, to the evident astonishment of a stray passer-by. "It wasn't altogether a successful experiment last time, my dear, was it? But, Cissy, it is still best I should keep away from you. We can write, meet now and then; but let me still remain unknown to your husband. Believe me, it is best so for the present. You will know always where to find me now. I am close at hand if you want me."

"I shall often want you, father dear, though not in the way you hint," rejoined Cissy. "I don't anticipate more than a slight lecture from Montague, whatever my

offending. But it is hard you will not set foot in my house."

"No, child, no, decidedly not. Don't let me make discord between you and your husband. You must be content to ignore your old father, except troublous times should come upon you. No remonstrances, Cissy, it must be as I say. And now, good-bye, dear."

"It shall be as you wish," she returned, meekly. "I suppose you know best, but I think you are wrong, father," and as she spoke, she lifted her face to receive his kiss.

The Major laid his lips lightly on her brow, and then said once more,

"Good-bye, child. Remember, if the milliners' bills get alarming, I have money —aye! money of your own, when you choose to ask for it. Now you had best trot home."

Cissy dropped her veil, pressed his hand and then walked swiftly away. As she

passed out of the Square a gentleman half-raised his hat to her, but absorbed in her own thoughts Mrs. Gore never noticed him. Muttering a slight ejaculation of astonishment, he pushed briskly onwards until he overtook the Major sauntering slowly towards Oxford Street. He honoured him with a tolerably comprehensive stare, of which the Major, thinking over his interview with his daughter, was quite unconscious.

It was the identical passer-by who had appeared astonished when he had seen the Major caressing his daughter's hand, and now his astonishment had changed to a look of troubled anxiety.

"It *was* Mrs. Gore," he muttered, as he strode rapidly down Gloucester Place. "The other was Claxby Jenkens, and by God! if I didn't see him kiss her, I'll mistrust my eyesight for ever. My poor dear Montie, I never liked the marriage, but I little thought she would play you false before the

chime of your wedding-bells had died out of our ears."

Deserted as I have described Montague Square to usually be, it may be deemed a curious coincidence that the Major and Cissy should be thus recognized; but the wrong person turning up at the wrong time, in the wrong place, is an experience that has happened to most of us.

CHAPTER IX.

CHARLIE DETFIELD'S WOOING.

CHARLIE DETFIELD has arrived at one of those crises, which will occur in the lives of those who live not wisely but too well. He has been looking forward to it for some months, with the imperturbable *sang froid* with which he considers it is proper to confront both the ills and pleasures of this world. He has come to those last few days before the inevitable crash, when all attempt at further struggling with destiny seems useless. When man drifts aimlessly along, wondering what manner of

life may be in store for him. There is no particular use in economizing those few resources still remaining, in making the last money we can lay our spendthrift fingers on, go far. It is only a question of weeks—*Dum vivimus vivamus.* Let the last days of the old life be pleasant at all events.

True, Charlie has what is not given to every man—a chance of averting the coming catastrophe. He knows that the announcement of his engagement to a lady with money would cause the rapacious Simmonds to stay his hand, would induce his clamorous creditors to wait, at all events, till they should see what that wedding would do for them. Clearly he must be affianced to Aunt Clem ere many days be over, if he is to save a complete break up. He has made up his mind that this thing is to be; but he has hitherto been in no hurry to ask the question. Sooth to say, the idea of marrying Miss Clementina has grown much more distasteful of late.

He rejected the first suggestion, of setting himself straight by a wealthy marriage, with great disdain. He has felt rather a contempt for himself, ever since he yielded to the force of circumstances—to the pressure brought to bear npon him, from more than one quarter, both persuasively and pecuniarily. Most especially is he indignant with Lizzie Paynter, and no one of his advisers is more disinterested than she. It is difficult to make a man believe that the woman who professes to love him, would not keep him to herself if she could—that she should prefer his interest before her own love is beyond his comprehension. There is a leaven of vanity and selfishness mingled with this said passion in most of us.

Lovers' quarrels are proverbial, and if you analyse such as fall under your notice, you will find one or other of those sentiments at the bottom of them.

But Charlie has determined to take the plunge without more delay. As he makes

his way leisurely towards Barnsbury Park, this bright June morning, and never did a man proceed with greater deliberation on his mission, he smiles bitterly to himself. He is mentally comparing it to that other plunge he made at Epsom, in the hope of relieving himself in some measure from his difficulties. When the judge's fatal adverse verdict of a short head, so infinitely more complicated affairs that really admitted of no further complication. When condoled with by his intimates on that disaster, Charlie had rejoined with a phlegm that did credit to his training—

"It don't matter much. If it had come off it would have been only out-door relief for a time—the workhouse, just as inevitable a little later, as now you know."

Then, curious subject for a man to pursue on his way to propose for another lady, he begins to think of Bessie. He muses over her bright *riante* face, over the soft brown eyes that are wont to fall beneath his own,

over the girl's frank, graceful manner. "How very nice she is," he thinks. "So utterly unspoilt by the stagey conventionalities of society. She don't bore one with skating, Princes, Hurlingham or the opera. Yes, a little enthusiastic about the last perhaps, but in such a different manner from the usual clap-trap. By Jove!" ejaculates Charlie, sententiously, "if I were a little younger I'll be shot if I couldn't make a fool of myself, as Brine hinted, and fall downright in love with that girl. Yes, more in love a good deal, than I ever did yet. Bah! you idiot! what have you to do with Aphrodite and her worship? What you want is,

> "'A father-in-law so wealthy and grand,
> He could give cheque-mate to Coutts in the Strand,
> So along with a ring and posy,
> He endows the bride with Golconda off-hand,
> And gives the groom Potosi.'

"Yes," he continued, in jeering fashion to himself, travestying the golden poet—

"'Gold, still gold, it haunts him yet,
At the 'Golden Lion' he's always met,
A-tasting of golden sherries.'

"I shouldn't wonder if that's what comes to me of taking a golden wife. What a thundering mean cuss I feel just now, and how jolly miserable for a man who is about to ask a woman to make him happy for life. I wonder whether she'll have Bessie to stay with her when we are married. If I was a mature bride, I'd have no pretty nieces about the premises—no, nor yet maids. Well, I think I'm decked for the sacrifice," and Charlie cast a glance at the flower in the button-hole. "Next time I tread these stones I suppose it will be as 'Benedick the married man.'"

That Aunt Clem might say him nay, you see, never entered this young coxcomb's head, and yet Charlie Detfield had certainly no more conceit than the generality of men of his age and station. But he held a creed common enough among men of the world,

to wit, that at the critical time of life at which Aunt Clem had arrived, an unmarried woman is rather solicitous on the subject of marriage. She feels her chances are slipping rapidly away from her, and that to say no now, is perchance to have said no for ever. Although she may have seen many of her sisters marry much later in life, she regards them as rather exceptional cases. Widows, of course, are like comets, as baffling to the social philosopher in his observations as the latter to the astronomer. They abandon their weeds within a few weeks—they adhere firmly to them for years, spite of earnest solicitation to the contrary. They are women with experiences. Past masters, likely to know more of connubial bliss than those who would have them attempt it once more.

But by this time, in spite of all his deliberation, Charlie has arrived at Barnsbury Park. No nervous old lady could have taken such care of herself about the cross-

ings as he has done. A cab, two hundred yards off, and coming at a snail's gallop, a veritable "crawler," was enough to make that active guardsman pause before risking his precious neck.

Never upon any previous occasion had he been so struck with the contents of the shop-windows, and if those in St. John's Street Road can prove attractive, verily a man must be easy to amuse. But though you may count the flag-stones, and be particular about not putting your feet upon their joinings, you must arrive at last at your destination. We all know these terrible journeys to achieve interviews we would fain avoid. That jerk at the bell, or nervous rattle of the knocker which reminds one so vividly of the tug at the string in a February shower-bath. Well for us if we come out in the healthy glow, with which that formidable tonic is supposed to endue us. Charlie has pulled his string, that is bell, and is conscious of icy sensations down the

spinal-marrow. But he has wavered no jot in his intention. He means to come out of that house Miss Clementina Stanbury's accepted lover, unless all opportunity of asking her consent to that arrangement be denied him.

The portly man-servant answers in the affirmative, to his inquiries for the Misses Stanbury, ushers him upstairs, and pompously announces him. For a second he thinks the room is empty, then he becomes aware of a cloud of diaphanous draperies in the recess of the window, and Bessie rises to greet him.

"Yes, she is all alone," she says, the blood rushing to her conscious cheek, as she recalls that conversation of a day or two back, as to who was it that her visitor came there to see. "Aunt Matilda is keeping her room for a slight attack of neuralgia, and Aunt Clem is out, but she will be in before long, no doubt."

Charlie settles himself comfortably in an

easy-chair, and is properly sympathetic about Miss Stanbury's neuralgia. Of course, he must await Miss Clementina's return. He has a duty to perform, (I am afraid he regards it rather in that light), and cannot postpone the performing of it longer, as he well knows. In the meantime it will be very pleasant to have a long lazy talk with Bessie.

"How is Velvet?" he inquired, smiling, "I think she is the only one of the family, now, that I have not asked after."

"Oh! Velvet is very well, almost too well," replied Bessie, "she hasn't had half enough work lately, and gave herself airs in consequence, yesterday."

"What, misbehaved?"

"No, not that. Don't you know, Captain Detfield, that Velvet is like her mistress, and never misbehaves, but she was, what shall I say, rather uppish."

"I see, danced a good deal, and hinted at kicking and rearing."

"Just so, but it's quite make believe on her part. She never ventures to so really misconduct herself as that. She's a bit of a coquette, I think, and institutes a mock quarrel with me, when I don't take her out regularly."

"I, at least, can sympathize with you on that head. What hot water we men get into, when we neglect our social duties."

"Then you shouldn't neglect them. Of course, we consider it bad manners and bad taste, when you don't come to see us," returned Bessie, demurely.

"But I plead not guilty, at least, as far as Barnsbury Park is concerned. You make, I mean you all make, the house too pleasant to allow one to keep away."

The girl's colour rose a little, as with a gay laugh, she retorted,

"Barnsbury Park feels honoured by Captain Detfield's preference."

She did not quite approve of that "all,"

she had marked the correction. She could not guess that her visitor was trying to persuade himself that he had no predilection, at all events. If he did not feel quite so interested in Miss Clementina, as a man should who had come to ask her consent in marriage, still Charlie did not wish to acknowledge an undue interest in anyone else.

"By the way, Captain Detfield, do you recollect Minnie Rendleshaw, the pretty girl in blue, I introduced you to the other night."

"Yes," returned Charlie. "Against succumbing to whose attractions you warned me so impressively."

"Just so! and very much obliged to me you ought to be. What might your feelings have been at learning she's the bride of another?" and Bessie indulged in a mock melodramatic start, as she made the announcement.

"Can't possibly say what agony it might

have occasioned. As it is, I'm tranquil. I couldn't feel calmer if I were iced."

"Well, I am not, I feel quite angry about it. Minnie really is a nice girl, and to think that she is going to throw herself away on that old, ugly, disagreeable Mr Mobbles is simply disgusting."

"I presume Mobbles is possessed of some latent attractions, not perceptible to most of us," replied Charlie, languidly.

"Oh! she takes him for his money, of course. He's rich as Crœsus, you know. But she ought to be ashamed of selling herself in that fashion," and Bessie threw herself back in her chair, with the prettiest possible pout of indignation.

Detfield's face flushed slightly, it is not pleasant to hear the parallel of one's own contemplated line of conduct commented on disdainfully.

"I suppose," he said at length, "these arrangements are necessary in our social system. You can't have everything. Miss

Rendlesham hankers doubtless for dresses, jewels, carriages, &c., and she takes a man who can give her them."

"As if a girl worth taking couldn't do without all those things, sooner than marry a man she did not love."

"I don't know about whether she could," rejoined Charlie, slowly. "As far as my experience goes, there isn't much disposition to try the experiment."

"For shame, Captain Detfield, I don't believe a word of it!" cried Bessie, her eyes flashing with indignation. "Cases like Minnie's are the exception, not the rule."

"When you have lived in the world a little longer, you will change your opinion," observed Charlie, sententiously.

"I hope not. I trust not," replied the girl, in quick earnest tones. "Of course, one expects to encounter meanness and selfishness sometimes, but, I shall be very sorry if ever I should come to regard

them otherwise, than as exceptional cases."

She coloured slightly as she finished, and her eyes fell beneath her companion's unmistakable gaze of admiration. A violent revulsion had taken place in Detfield's mind during the last few seconds.

"May you carry that faith to your grave," he replied. "And you; suppose this was your own case, that a man loved you whose own folly had ruined him—who had been mean enough to cherish the idea of repairing his fortunes by a wealthy marriage, but who, at the last moment, was recalled to his better self by the words that have just fallen from your lips."

Bessie's heart stood still. She knew now that she loved this man. Was the fact of her being rich to stand between them and that too from her own foolish speech.

"I don't think you understood me quite," she murmured in a low voice.

"I hope so," he continued earnestly. "Could you make up your mind to wait, Bessie, till this man retrieved his past sufficiently to offer you a home."

"What could he mean?" she wondered. "Surely he was speaking of himself. Asking her to be his wife, yet repudiating a wealthy marriage. Perhaps he didn't call her rich — with those he habitually consorted it might be that such fortune as her's was deemed of small account."

"Won't you answer me, darling?" continued Charlie, in low pleading tones. "Won't you tell me that you can love and wait for me."

She was puzzled still, but her heart gave a great leap. He was asking her to be his now, that was clear.

"Not a word for me yet. Have I made a mistake, or is it that you fear to pledge yourself to a ruined man?"

"Oh, Charlie! Captain Detfield! you know," cried Bessie.

Apparently he did, for he drew her to himself and kissed her, and as she buried her blushing face in his waistcoat, whispered into her ear,

"Mine, are you not?"

A little tremulous "yes" was the sole reply.

As a rule, I fancy, there is not much said upon these occasions—at all events, now-a-days. When George the Third was king, perhaps it was different. Did the lovers of those times preface the momentous question with a couple of pages of compliment and commonplace like Richardson's heroes. I suppose they *did kneel.* I wonder whether anyone ever does now. A proposal I should imagine, in the "good old times," loomed in the future for some months, and the lover and his mistress mutually rehearsed what they would say when it came about for weeks previously.

Nature, I presume, got the best of the conventionalities here and there. In our high pressure age we cannot afford to spend so much time about it. We do our courting (I like the dear old-fashioned word) quicker, and a young gentleman of the nineteenth century is no more nervous about asking a lady for her hand than for her photograph.

"Bessie, my darling!" said Detfield, as he released her, "do you quite understand what you have done?"

"I think so," she replied smiling. "Promised to be your wife."

"Yes, to be wife to a pauper, you understand?"

Bessie nodded, and looked as jubilant as if he had said "millionaire."

"Wife to a man who has not as yet even a home to offer you."

Again the girl nodded gaily, as she rereplied,

"But I hope he will have some day."

"And you don't repent?"

"You don't give me much time, Charlie," she exclaimed laughing. "When I come to doing the grates, you know—we shall be so poor, I suppose, that I shall have to do those—then, perhaps—" she stopped abruptly, blushed, and bowed her head.

"What?" he asked anxiously.

"I shall thank God that I am married to the man I love best," she continued proudly, raising her frank, innocent eyes fondly to his.

Bessie was very young, but she might have guessed what the sequel to such a speech was likely to be.

"Well, my own," said Charlie, after one of those brief intervals which will occur in lovers' conversations, not the less interesting to those concerned because the conversation has languished. "If you will only wait for me, I will claim you before long."

"I can wait and trust, Charlie," replied the girl gently.

Remarkable is the confidence induced by this self-same passion called "love." Charlie Detfield knew perfectly well that he was a ruined man, and had almost as much idea of how he was to earn a living in the days to come, as he had of solving the problem of perpetual motion, but he no more doubted of his capabilities at this moment than he did of his existence.

"Well, Bessie, it may be as long as two or three years, but we shall see each other and write," and here nothing further occurring to him to say upon the peculiarly hazy future, he stroked her hair fondly.

But the sharp rattle of the door-handle causes the lovers to spring rapidly apart, and Charlie could not forbear smiling as he rose to greet Aunt Clem, and thought what a mess he had made of his last battle with his destiny. He had come to win a wealthy bride, and stood affianced to a portionless girl. He had never thought much about what Bessie's prospects might

be—dependant on her aunts he imagined, but had really troubled his head little on the matter.

Although Miss Clementina rattled on carelessly on indifferent topics, she had observed indications noticeable only to a feminine eye, and drawn her own conclusions. Detfield cut his visit from this as short as he decently could, and no sooner had the door closed behind him than she said quietly,

"I don't know, Bessie; but I have an idea that you can tell Matilda for certain now who it is that Captain Detfield comes to see in Barnsbury Park."

CHAPTER X.

AN EMBARRAS DE RICHESSE.

MONTAGUE GORE still nurses his skeleton, with all the assiduity that a man habituated to a solitary life is wont to devote to such grim bantlings. Long nights passed in chambers give a man much faculty for this species of self-torture, and he broods over his relations with his wife more than is good for him. Could he but see it, he is in a fair way to gain so much heart as Cissy may possess. There are women, as men, who are not over-burdened with very much. Life, perhaps, runs more

smoothly for such, than for those with more acute susceptibilities. If they don't enjoy the pleasures, they, at all events, avoid the pains suffered by their less phlegmatic sisters.

Cissy, so far, has been of the former class. A woman who has been accustomed to repress her feelings in her girlhood, is not likely to part with her love lightly; may, indeed, well nigh stifle any capacity for loving by this unnatural training. For to love in some fashion is part of a woman's nature. In high nervous organizations, want of outlet for the affections will kill as surely as if it were actually the consumption it is sometimes called.

But Gore, jealous of his wife's love, cannot see that he must call time to his aid; that a woman such as Cissy cannot change mere liking into love at short notice. He has made much progress with her, but is altogether unaware of the fact. She is not a demonstrative woman, as may be supposed.

She shows her feelings with some timidity. She cannot forget the jeers such a display had at times provoked from Mark Hemsworth in the early days of their wedded life, and even yet cannot help fearing that any show of emotion may call forth ridicule. It is difficult for a man to discover what advance he makes in the good graces of a woman like Cissy.

Mrs. Gore has met her father upon two or three occasions, since that first interview in Montague Square. The Major, callous as he is to all other sentiment, is wonderfully soft about this one passion of his scheming existence—his love for his daughter. He separated himself utterly from her before, as he thought for her good, and what came of it? Better he had been there to restrain Mark Hemsworth in his brutality. He cannot sever all communication between them again. He wishes to see her occasionally, to watch over her, and yet to keep his relationship, indeed his very existence, a secret from

her husband for the present. He wants to be convinced that this second marriage has turned out happily, before he discovers himself. Judging from his own knowledge of mankind, he thinks that a man will look over the drawback of a father-in-law's bearing a somewhat unsavoury reputation, who should come to him with twelve hundred a year in his hand. To disclose the history of Cissy's settlement on her first marriage, is to make that addition to Montague Gore's income.

On the other hand, should this marriage turn out unhappily, he will keep all knowledge of that settlement to himself, and draw the income derived from it in his daughter's behalf. He knows that the moment he appears upon the scene as Cissy's father, he will infallibly be questioned as to whether there was no settlement on the first marriage. But as long as his whereabouts, or even the fact of his being alive, is unknown, it will be difficult for anyone to get at the truth regarding that subject.

This settlement is made upon a large farm in Nottinghamshire, which had been left to Mark Hemsworth by an uncle. The tenant was accustomed to pay his rent into the hands of certain bankers at Nottingham, who transmitted it duly to a French House through their London correspondents. But a business man like Hemsworth had money constantly passing to and fro, from his Parisian bankers to various London houses, and *vice versâ*.

It was not easy to find the clue to this property, without a guide; of course there was another trustee, but he was a willing abettor of the Major in his scheme. With very hazy ideas regarding his legal obligations, a passionate devotion to Cissy's interests, and a firm conviction that whatever else the Major might be, his love for his daughter was no sham.

The strength of a chain is limited to its weakest point, without reference to the stronger links. Your practised intriguers

invariably have their weak link, usually overlooked in the complicated web they have woven. Accident hits it, and their scheme becomes nothing. Fate favours them, and the flaw escapes detection. Many notable frauds have come to light through the overlooking of some trifle, that it was scarcely conceivable their originators should have lost sight of. It is in the petty details that swindlers of the *première force* usually break down. Their conceptions are grand, they elaborate their plan with an assiduity and cleverness worthy of better things, but a date, a name, a place apparently of little consequence escapes them, and their cobweb is rent past repair. They are taken in their own nets.

It has never occurred to the Major that clandestine meetings with his own daughter may be miscontrued, should they chance to be witnessed. It is so impossible almost for a father to imagine that he could be deemed his daughter's lover, that even this astute

schemer may be forgiven for over-looking such a probability. It certainly never occurred to bluff John Paynter, when raising his hat to Mrs. Gore one morning in Portland Place, as she was walking with her father, that he was more than any other ordinary acquaintance, and it was with the idlest common-place curiosity, that two days afterwards, when dining with the Gores, he inquired,

"Who was your cavalier the other day, Mrs. Gore? a face I know well, but cannot put a name to."

"When do you mean?" replied Cissy.

"On Thursday, in Portland Place. A good-looking man, with hair just shot with grey."

The Major had eschewed his spectacles upon that occasion.

"I don't recollect," replied Cissy, taken a little aback.

"Oh, nonsense! you must remember. You returned my bow, you know. A shrewd

sharp face, and seemed as if his talk was worth listening to. I'll swear I've seen him about town."

"Yes, of course, how stupid of me. Don't you think you were rather rude not to stop and shake hands. Really, Lizzie, you should teach him better manners, I declare he all but cut me, and you are responsible, my dear, for him on those points."

"Of course I am," returned Mrs. Paynter, seeing with all the quickness of a woman, that her friend wished the conversation turned. "Are you disengaged on Wednesday, Cissy, if so, I have a box at Covent Garden? Come with me and hear Patti."

"Shall be charmed, and now I think we will go upstairs and look for some tea."

Montague Gore had not lost a word of this discussion. He thought very little about it at the time; but it happening to recur to him, just after the Paynters had left, he also idly asked,

"Who was your friend of Thursday, Cissy?"

"Nobody you know," returned his wife.

"Perhaps so, but I suppose he has a name," observed Gore, listlessly.

Cissy paused for a moment, and then said,

"Well, that's just what he has not, just now. I met him in Paris, and have known him for some years. He does not want his presence in England talked about."

"I don't want to interfere with you, Cissy, but however old a friend he may be, I think, under those circumstances, you would be wiser not to walk with him."

"You tell me not to?" demanded Mrs. Gore, a little sharply.

"Nothing of the kind. I have too much confidence in you to say anything so authoritative. I merely suggested it were

perhaps better not to do so, should you meet him again."

"I understand," replied Cissy, as she lit her bed-room candle, and walked somewhat moodily away, to reflect upon this complication that had suddenly arisen in her new life.

Gore mused a little upon who this mysterious friend of his wife's Paris days might be. He reflected that Cissy might have formed acquaintance in those times, that it was by no means desirable she should keep up. No idea of jealousy had as yet presented itself to his mind, but the soil was ripe for the sowing. With his morbid feelings regarding his wife's love for himself, there never was ground better adapted for the rearing of "the green-eyed monster,"

> "If I do prove her haggard,
> Though that her jesses were my dear heart-strings,
> I'd whistle her off, and let her down the wind,
> To prey at fortune,"

would be pretty much the idea of a man

of Montague Gore's temperament. Men of this frame of mind sometimes both suffer themselves, and inflict needless tortures on women thoroughly true to them. And yet it must be said for Montague Gore that he was not a suspicious man. He believed implicitly in the woman he had married—in her honesty, in her rectitude. He would have scorned to interfere with her selection of acquaintances. He knew she had been sore tried, and firmly believed she had borne her temptations as few women, so young as she then was, would have been capable of doing. But he was painfully alive to the fact, that as yet he had not won her love. He began to despair of ever gaining it. He had thought, when he married, that such entire love as his must gain response before long—she had been so truthful about her feelings when she accepted him. Alas! she was so truthful still. She never condescended to simulate the passion she did not feel. He could not get over this. Esteem! gratitude! bah! He

wanted this woman's heart. He craved for that way to "the side door," which, as Wendell Holmes says, "opens at once into the secret chambers."

Breakfast was nearly over the next morning, when Cissy exclaimed a little nervously,

"Montague, you must let me have some more money, please, I am destitute."

"You really ought not to be," he replied, gravely. "I gave you fifty pounds only a fortnight ago."

"I know, but things cost so much. I ought not, I suppose, to have spent it all, but I have, and there are the house-bills to settle this week."

"Well, I cannot give it you now for I've not above four or five pounds in my pocket, which would not be much use, but I will draw a cheque on my way to the Temple, and you shall have what you want this afternoon."

"Very many thanks."

"But, Cissy, my dear, do bear in mind I'm a man of moderate means. I don't want to deny your right to dip your pretty fingers into my purse, still if you're not a little more careful the time will come when you will dip to no purpose."

"I will try," she replied, "but, Montague, remember, it comes difficult to me. I have hitherto been taught only to spend money."

"A shocking preparation for thrifty housekeeping," he rejoined, laughing. "Never mind, you will learn in time. And now I must be off. Good-bye, my wife," and having pressed his lips lightly on her brow, Gore took his departure.

"He's very good to me," muttered Cissy. "I thought he would have said more about my spending so much money. Moderate means! I do wish somebody would explain to me what constitutes moderate means. I must ask Montague how much it is a month, and how much again of that I may have, and having ascertained all that, well, I

suppose," she continued, laughing, "I shall spend double. The science of economy *pour faire les économies* is the most difficult study I ever tried yet."

Her meditations finished, Mrs. Gore remembered that she had some shopping to do. If you are at all known, an empty purse is not the slightest impediment to that in London; in fact, the only wonder is the credulity of the West End tradesmen is not more severely punished. A fashionable address, a brougham, the display of a little ready money to start with, and a very moderate stock of assurance will induce credit past belief amongst them. Cissy having issued her orders to one or two well-known millinery establishments in Regent Street, turns down Conduit Street, and as she enters Bond Street finds herself face to face with her father.

"My dear," exclaimed the Major, "where are you trotting to? Let's turn into Berkley Square and have a chat."

"Nowhere in particular," replied Cissy, as she took his arm, "but, father, gossiping with you leads to awkward questions. Mr. Paynter, a friend of mine, passed us the other day in Portland Place, and he wants to know who you are."

"Curse his inquisitiveness," rejoined the Major, promptly. "A species of Paul Pry, I presume."

"No, father dear, he's nothing of the sort. He's as good, straight-forward a man as ever lived, has been very kind to me, and is a great friend of my husband's—indeed, it was at his house that I first met Montague. It was put as an idle question of curiosity, but it was awkward."

"And what did you say?" inquired the Major, as they turned the Square.

"Fell back, *mon père*, upon my sex's usual weapon in such time of difficulty, evasion."

"And it stood you in good stead?"

"Only moderately so, if it hadn't been

for Lizzie's quick tact, that's his wife you must know, I don't think it would. But she saw I wanted the conversation turned, and she did it."

"Ah! well then there's no harm done."

"Yes, there is, for Montague took it into his head to ask afterwards with whom I had been walking."

"And you told him?" asked the Major, sharply.

"That it was somebody he had never heard of. An old Parisian acquaintance, who, for reasons best known to himself, did not wish his presence in London to be talked about."

"And that satisfied him, child, eh?"

"Well, he said no more; but suggested, under those circumstances, I had better not be seen walking with you. He was kind, father, as he always is. There was no must not, nor shall not, about it. He merely hinted that it was injudicious."

"And he was right, Cissy. I'm beginning

to believe in this new husband of yours. A man who gives advice instead of commands to the woman he has made his wife, deserves her attention, to say the least of it. It is a pity you can't love him, child."

Mrs. Gore's face flushed like a girl's as she listened to her father's commendation of her husband, and it was in almost a whisper she replied,

"I like him a great deal better than I did, am growing to like him better every day, I think. He is so kind, so thoughtful. I had to tell him to-day I wanted some more money, and I could see he considered I had spent a great deal more than I had a right to; but all he said was that if I wasn't more careful I should come to the bottom of the purse, and then it would be no use my putting my hands into it."

"But I told you the other day I had money of your very own for you

if you wanted it. I haven't got it about me, but come along to my rooms in Charles Street. I can give you a hundred of your very own money, Cissy."

"That would be nice," she replied, as visions of liquidating one or two out-standing accounts crossed her mind. "Let us go."

It was very little way to walk, and Cissy speedily found herself installed in the most carefully calculated chair for comfort in the Major's most carefully balanced establishment. She smiled, as she noted all the old habits of order that she had been familiar with as a child. Not that she had ever lived much with her father, but she remembered well how punctilious he was wont to be on those points. Even now, as she threw her hat carelessly on the writing table, he removed it and placed it quietly on another as more appropriate. And yet he was so pleased to have her there. He insisted she should have a glass of wine, dived into a

mysterious cupboard, and produced a cob-webbed bottle of port that he averred was supposed to be old, very old. He hunted out biscuits for her. This shrewd, hard, cynical shearer of human lambkins fluttered about his daughter in a manner that those who knew him could not have believed. I don't think there were many of his acquaintance would have believed in a soft spot in Major Jenkens.

While Cissy sipped her port and nibbled her biscuit, the Major had unlocked an old-fashioned walnut escritoire, from one of the drawers of which he took a roll of bank-notes.

"Give me your purse, child," he said, as he crossed towards her, "and I will fresh stock it for you."

"Indeed it needs it sadly," she replied laughing, as she handed her neat morocco porte-monnaie over to him. "It is pure ostentation carrying about such a useless article as it is at present."

"There," he replied, as he returned it after a few seconds. "That's better, Cissy. You will find ten notes for ten pound a-piece when you next open it. Remember in future that I have a good deal of money of yours. You have only to write to me when you want some."

"Thanks, father, dear; and now I think I must run away. What a sweet daughter you've got. She drinks your wine, eats your biscuits, gets all she can out of you, in short, and then she's off."

"Ah, well, she's got very little that wasn't her own out of me this morning," said her father laughing. "Good-bye, my darling."

It was late that afternoon when Montague Gore returned home. That his wife was in was evident. Her hat, gloves, parasol, &c., were thrown carelessly on the table, while the tea equipage stood waiting. He sat down, and taking up the parasol commenced fiddling with it. In so doing he displaced Cissy's pocket-handkerchief, which discovered

her purse, hitherto concealed. An idea struck him. He threw down the parasol, and drawing a note-case from his breast pocket selected some of the contents, then taking up the purse he opened it with the intention of placing the notes within it. To his surprise he found it well-filled. He snapped the porte-monnaie to again and relinquished his intention. What did this mean? Why on earth should Cissy ask him for money when she had plenty? He didn't know how much—he hadn't counted it—he had no intention of doing so, but that she had several bank-notes in her purse was evident.

He sat for some time pondering over this enigma. He wondered whether she would explain it. If she had all that money, what made her come to him for more? if she had not, how could she have procured it since breakfast. When Cissy entered the room he placed his notes in her hand, with the brief remark—

"There's what you asked me for, I hope it's enough."

"Thanks, yes; you are very good, Montague, it is ample."

"Why, you havn't counted it, how can you know?"

"Oh! I'm sure it is—I can see it is;" she replied, nervously turning over the notes.

Her heart smote her. She would have liked to have told him that she did not want it now—that she had plenty of money of her own. But then how was she to do this without discovering her father? She was beginning to see that this mystery, the Major thought proper to maintain regarding their relationship, would involve her in endless difficulties, but she never dreamt of breaking her promise to him. She raised her eyes, and fancied she detected a troubled expression in her husband's face, but of course she could not ascribe it to its real cause. She thought he was perhaps still

apprehensive of her extravagant habits. She smiled, as she exclaimed,

"Don't look as if you thought I should ruin you, Montague. I intend to make this go ever so much further than the last."

"We'll hope so, Cissy;" he replied, quietly. "I shall watch your economies with great curiosity."

It was evident that she had no intention of explaining.

CHAPTER XI.

THE PUMPING OF MR. TURBOTTLE.

MR. BRINE having, with the natural incoherence of his disposition, arrived at King's Cross precisely three minutes after his train had departed, abandoned himself for a little to the abuse of the railway authorities generally. Reflecting at length that punctuality on their part was scarcely assailable in the journals, and his own watch bearing testimony to the veracity of the station-clock, he ordered his portmanteau to be taken to the Great Northern

Hotel, and determined to postpone his journey to the following morning.

It is curious to observe how differently people bear this little *contretemps*. I am supposing, mind, that the disappointment is not involving momentous issues, or even very great inconvenience. There are some who are so agitated at this common-place misfortune, that you would suppose their very future was involved in arriving at their destination by that particular train. Others phlegmatically pace the platform, study the book-stalls, ascertain their correct weight, and upon the whole rather enjoy themselves, till there comes to them another opportunity of starting on their way.

I knew one philosopher who, scorning to be tied to time in any shape, never looked at a Bradshaw. He drove to the station, and simply asked when the next train started for wherever he might be going. He said nothing amused him more than a big terminus. Some betake themselves to the

refreshment-room, and console themselves with the flowing bowl in the shape of dubious sodas and brandy. We, many of us, must remember Mr. Sala's story when he "missed connection" travelling in America, and had, as they say there, "to lie over." How his two philosophic fellow-travellers producing a demi-john of whisky, called for hot water, and sitting calmly down on either side of the stove proceeded to abstract themselves from all such mundane matters as trains, unpunctual or otherwise, arriving speedily at that state of beatitude in which one place is as good as another.

Some there are who drive themselves to the very verge of idiotcy by furious study of Bradshaw, with a view to getting to their destination in a mysterious round about mannner, meditating, for instance, at a London terminus going round by York to arrive at some place in Surrey. Others of feeble lymphatic temperament pass their time in heart-rending appeals to guards, porters, &c.,

and make frantic dashes at every train that goes off—no matter for where. They have to be continually taken out of trains by the railway officials, and pour their sorrows undisguisedly, with much superfluous information concerning their families and pursuits, into the ear of the first stranger who is weak enough to listen to them. When their veritable train does start, they are usually in the middle of the recital of their wrongs, and have to be bundled into a carriage breathless, at the last moment.

But Fox Brine was none of these. After the first few minutes of exasperation were over, he had made his decision as before narrated. The next question was, what was he to do with himself this afternoon? Exercise! yes, he wanted exercise. Now in what direction should he take his exercise? Suddenly it occurred to him that he had not called upon the Paynters since dining there.

"The very thing," quoth Mr. Brine.

"I can just slip along the Euston Road, and there we are. The social amenities respected, and the liver kept in order all in one. Who wouldn't be a slave to society? Off she goes."

Mr. Brine rejoiced in the usual fortune which attends making a call some distance off in London, he was privileged to leave a card. When shall we arrive at that great social reform, when an engraved post-card will be deemed sufficient acknowledgment of the wines and cates we have consumed. "Idleness is the root of all calling," quoth Dr. Dasent. He is wrong. The bachelor who *does* his calls conscientiously in London, can never be accused of idleness, and should be in very tolerable condition for the 12th, unless he resorts to cabs or similar depravity—broughams on credit, for instance. Married men expect their wives to take this duty upon their own shoulders, and it is to be hoped either keep carriages for them, or pay the livery stable-keeper's account without comment.

Mr. Brine then bethought him of stretching across to the Marble Arch, and so through Hyde Park to his club. "Better a dinner there," he thought, "than a solitary evening at the Great Northern," and thus it came about that he passed through Montague Square, and witnessed the parting between Mrs. Gore and her father.

It troubled him a good deal. Gore was one of his oldest and dearest friends, and he had much disliked the idea of his marriage with a woman of whose family he knew nothing, and of whose antecedents he knew so very little more. But Brine was a man of the world, and knew that to attempt to argue with a man in love, especially when he was of Gore's age, probably results in a quarrel with your friend, but nothing else. He had taken a dislike to Cissy, when he met her at the Paynters. He could allege no reason for such dislike. One of those instinctive antipathies we all occasionally conceive, and to which some of us are so

much more prone than others. Such dislike, at times, well warranted by further knowledge of the person; at others, on more intimate acquaintance, admitted to have been absurd and unjust. Love at first sight, if not a frequent, is by no means quite so rare an occurrence as may be supposed. Prejudice against or in favour of those we meet, takes place daily with most of us.

Brine, the next morning, as he speeds on his way to Nottingham, meditates a good deal on that parting he had witnessed. How on earth could a woman in Mrs. Gore's position, keep up a clandestine intimacy with such a very doubtful character as Claxby Jenkens? He felt certain that her husband knew nothing of it. What hold had this man over her? What terms must she not be on with him, to warrant his kissing her at parting? Where could she have known him? As he reflects over all these things, Brine, as we are all wont to

do when puzzled, builds up a story for himself, based upon a little fact, and a good deal of imagination. Yes, Mrs. Gore most likely made the Major's acquaintance abroad, during the life-time of her first husband. He was an old lover with whom she still thought proper to keep up relations, or she was too much in his hands to venture to break with him. Bear in mind, the Major carried his years well, and was not yet fifty. There was nothing the least absurd in supposing him still quite capable of proving a successful wooer, while it was most unlikely that the real connection between him and Cissy should ever enter into Mr. Brine's head. He had accounted for that meeting, as with his slender knowledge concerning Mrs. Gore's previous life most men in his place would have done.

"There are two questions now to put to myself," thought Brine. "First, how am I to ascertain whether Mrs. Gore is yielding willingly to the attentions of that d—d

scoundrel, or whether he has simply got some hold over her, which obliges her to do his bidding? Secondly, what ought I to do? I can't sit still and see the dearest friend I have on earth wronged, and yet, though I mistrust her, and don't like her, it seems rather mean to take advantage of a woman in that way, and whisper so foul a charge behind her back. I wish to Heaven I hadn't missed the train yesterday, in that case I should have known nothing about it." Then Brine reflected, how fatal interference between man and wife invariably was to the interposer. He knew well that Gore was devoted to his bride. He knew further, that though not easy to provoke, he was a man of violent temper when roused. It was quite possible that he would regard him, Brine, as a vile traducer, and thrust the scandalous accusation on one side with vehement contempt.

It was a difficult situation to be placed in, and the more Brine mused over it, the more

bitterly did he curse the evil destiny that caused him to miss his train in the first instance, and to penetrate to the wilds of Montague Square in the second. But the train glides into the Nottingham Station, and having secured his portmanteau, Brine betakes himself to the 'George,' from which hostelrie he intends to prosecute his researches regarding the Hemsworth race.

He had seen the lace and hosiery metropolis but once before, then it was agitated with all the shrieks, cries, crowd, fun, and laughter of the Goose Fair. Now it is Nottingham the quiescent that lies before him. Nottingham the sleepy. Not a dozen people to be seen in the big dusty market-place, only a few loiterers in the broad burning streets. All provincial cities are given to a siesta, it is only in this huge, bubbling, eddying London of ours, that the roar never ceases. Nottingham sleeps. But Nottingham will be lively enough when the factory bells ring at six, as a signal that

the day's work is done, and the hands pour into the streets for a breath of fresh air before going home to their suppers.

Sanguine as Mr. Brine had been in John Paynter's dining-room, confidently as he had asserted that he would find lots of Hemsworths, now he had arrived at the scene of his researches, he felt a little puzzled how to begin. He mooned listlessly about the streets, reading the names over the shop doors, there was infinite variety, but he never met the name he wanted. He put the question confidentially to policemen, trades-people, street loungers, &c., with an ease and affability all his own; but as he remarked to himself, though expressed differently, it all comes to the same thing, "they knows nothing of no Hemsworths."

"It strikes me," mused Mr. Brine, as he sat smoking a solitary cigar in the George coffee-room, "that I have found an occupation. Nottinghamshire is a tolerably large

county. I wonder how long it will take to go over it, knock at every door, and inquire if a party of the name of Hemsworth lives within. Wheugh! I have it!" he exclaimed, giving vent to a jubilant whistle, "what a fool I was not to think of it at once. Here, waiter, get me the county directory."

"Yes-sir."

"Pens, ink, and paper. Ah! and some brandy and water, the directory will be dryish reading."

Mr. Brine pursued his researches calmly and resolutely. "It won't take quite so long as walking round the county," he muttered, "but it'll take some time to get through this. How confoundedly thickly populated they appear to be in these parts. If the inhabitants ran about half a dozen to the square mile, I should get on better. Ha! here we have a Hemsworth at last; a miller at Southwell. I don't suppose he'll do; but it's something to catch a Hemsworth of any kind. I don't think I pledged

myself to do more than produce Hemsworths. Good again, here's another, a widow, I presume, keeps a chandler's shop at Mansfield. They don't read like Hemsworths of property, these."

Here Mr. Brine's studies were interrupted by the entrance of a sleek clean-shaved little man with quick, beady black eyes.

"Indulging in the weed, I see, Sir, maybe you'd not object to my pipe. All right, William," he continued, turning to the waiter, as Brine nodded assent. "Six of gin cold, and a clean clay. I can't abear cigars, Sir, I know too much about 'em."

"How so?" asked Brine, looking hard at the stranger.

"Bless your innocence, I was in the trade once, I know how they're made—what a Tommy Dodd-ing business it is—hay, cabbage leaves, chopped straw. No, Sir, I likes tobacco."

"Why, it's Mr. Turbottle," exclaimed Brine, extending his hand.

"Beg pardon, Sir. I don't remember."

"What, not the Goose Fair, and the ingratitude of the British Public?"

"Why if it ain't the noble gladi*a*tor, dash my wig! This is a start, rum thing coincidences, Sir."

"What do you mean?" inquired Brine.

"Just this, last time we met was in this very room, and I ain't been in Nottingham since—and it's likely you ain't either."

Brine admitted that it was so, but inquired whether it was the unthankfulness of Nottingham that had caused Mr. Turbottle to, metaphorically speaking, shake the dust of that city from his feet.

"No, Sir, no! if you had been in the travelling or Tommy Dodd trade as long as me, you'd reckon up the public pretty much as I do. D—n 'em, there's no knowing where to have 'em, a woman ain't half so changeable as the B. P. You're their favourite to-day, and they'd tear your 'pitch'

down to-morrow. What they're mad for one week, they don't care about the next. The only thing you can't get to an end of is the feminine weakness for cheap jewellery, and the masculine vanity for hearing themselves talk, among wot they calls the democratic classes."

"Ah, you find that so?" interposed Brine, much amused.

"I tell you what it is," said Mr. Turbottle, solemnly, "I never met a young woman, who had three and sixpence, could resist my electro-plated brooches at that figger, and they tell me your countesses has the same weakness, only, in course, they goes for the real thing. Jewellery, Sir, is the great weakness of women, whether it's beads or diamonds. There's more girls ruined from love of finery than aught else. But might I ask what brings you into these parts?"

"Certainly, and it's just possible you can help me. I want to discover if a certain

Mark Hemsworth ever lived in these parts."

"Mark Hemsworth!" ejaculated Mr. Turbottle, with visible astonishment depicted in his countenance.

"Exactly, I see you know him," retorted Brine, sharply.

"I never said so," replied Mr. Turbottle, relighting his pipe with considerable display of being much engrossed in the performance.

"Not in words, but your face said so, plainly."

"Then my face lied, 'cause I didn't."

"You know him by name, though, if not personally," exclaimed Brine, eyeing his companion keenly.

"Maybe I did, and maybe I didn't," said Mr. Turbottle, sententiously. "What might you want to know for?"

"Well that's my business. Did you?"

"I aint going to answer any questions about him. As you say, it's your business

and none of mine. My own affairs are quite enough for me to attend to," observed Mr. Turbottle, throwing himself back in his chair, and commencing to smoke furiously.

"This man does know something about Mark Hemsworth," thought Brine, "but he is not going to tell me anything concerning him. How to make him speak."

"Now, Mr. Turbottle," resumed Brine at length, "I want a little information concerning Hemsworth's family and early life. If you can or will give it, I'll make it worth your while."

"Not a bit of use talking, Sir," retorted Mr. Turbottle stiffly. "I don't say I can, but if I could I wouldn't."

"But why not? what is your objection?"

"Because I won't," returned the worthy Turbottle, gulping down his gin and water, and showing a perspicuity in his reasoning of a somewhat feminine order.

Brine was on his metal, he considered his reputation involved in the discovery of Mark Hemsworth's antecedents ; but he was much too experienced a man of the world to press his companion further on the point at present. It was clear to him that he had lit upon a man, who in all probability could, if he would, give him the information he sought. It was equally clear to him that Mr. Turbottle, for causes best known to himself, was not to be persuaded, either by bribery or argument, to part with his knowledge just now. A bright idea flashed across him, liquor might loosen his companion's tongue. He changed the conversation, and proposed that Mr. Turbottle should join him in a bowl of gin punch, a subtle insidious compound much in vogue in those parts ; cool and innocent as mother's milk to the palate, but with all the elements of intoxication therein, as those that have drank it at Horncastle Fair can testify.

Mr. Turbottle assented gleefully, but the

experiment was not a success. Pouring gin-punch into the Trent was as likely to upset the course of the stream, as pouring that liquor into Mr. Turbottle, was to throw him off his balance. Stores of anecdotes, observations on men and manners flowed freely from his lips. He smoked, jested, and got extremely genial, but further than that he did not go, while his capacity for punch, it soon became evident to his entertainer, far exceeded his own.

When Fox Brine awoke the next morning, he had indistinct memories of difficulties about lighting his candlestick. He found that his watch had unaccountably stopped, and became conscious that if anybody had succumbed to the insidious temptations of gin-punch, it had not been Mr. Turbottle. On inquiring for that worthy, he learnt that he had departed early, but whither, no one could say.

"Had the clue and it has slipped through my fingers," quoth Mr. Brine, sadly, over

his tea and toast. "What a fool I was not at least to ascertain his address. If ever I try to make a countryman drunk again, may I be—well spifflicated is a good word, and can't be worse than the headache I am at present afflicted with."

CHAPTER XII.

MONTAGUE GORE REMONSTRATES.

IT is a sad moment when we first conceive distrust of her we love, when we commence to doubt her protestations of affection, when it dawns upon us that the golden charm is broken, when the letters wax shorter and fewer, when we know that some other has taken that place we once thought permanently our own. When we grimly reflect that

> "Woman's love is writ on water,
> Woman's love is traced on sand!"

Men take it differently; cynically as in the above; bitterly as Siebel sings,

> "Me she deceived, and thee she's deceiving;
> Devil that she is—whom there's no believing."

Philosophically: "The person you love most is the person with whom you can stay longest without being bored," and it is fair to presume we bore her. It is better so, perhaps, than that our liaison should have continued till she bored us. It is well to retreat gracefully from such a position, and relieve the lady of our love. Friendship may be possible, though love lies dead—a pale phantom crowned with withered roses—souvenirs of the *beaux moments* that have departed.

There are sore hearts and wet lashes on such occasions. It is not given to either men or women to attain philosophy always upon the shattering of their day-dream. Passion does not unfortunately die simultaneously, and on one side or the other

there is usually bitter regret. Those light loves, such as the butterfly bears to the flower, are perhaps to be envied, they leave but slight sting behind them. "A little glow, a little shiver," and that is all; but when one conceives a serious passion it is different, then one suffers. We may jest and mock, but we do. We can't take it all out in work, gambling, or claret.

Picture to yourself a man, his very veins thrilling with passionate love for the woman he has won to himself for a wife. Think of this man yearning for that answering love which he has hoped for, and feeling that he has not the power to quicken this woman's pulse-beats one to the minute. That the kiss that responds to his is cold and passionless, as the adored of Pygmalion before life was transferred into the marble his hand had wrought. Picture to yourself his gradually becoming hopeless of moving this heart, for the quickening of which he so thirsts. Think

of him feeling sadly and dejectedly, that all the wealth of love he had to throw at her feet, laid there, unacknowledged, unanswered.

Remember that this is no boy in the wild infatuation of a first glamour, but a man in his prime—loving with all the fierce strength of a man's passion. Then conceive its dawning upon him that she he has made his wife is carrying on an intrigue with another, that this woman who is as stone to him has married him with a favoured lover in the back-ground—that she has wedded him as a mere *pis-aller* that would enable her to live without being a drain on the resources of the man of her choice. Fancy all this, and you will have some idea of the ghastly phantoms that are now whirling through the brain of Montague Gore.

For it has come now to Gore to be a witness of his wife's parting with the mysterious stranger to whom John Paynter had

alluded. No great scene, nothing more than a few words of earnest conversation and a pressure of the hand had he witnessed. Although some distance off he recognised his wife. He would have scorned to be a spy upon her; but he was on his way home and overtook her a few seconds afterwards, no possibility of a mistake. It was undoubtedly Cissy, the man had turned abruptly up a bye street, and he saw him no more.

He asked her no question, and she said no word concerning her acquaintance. But it rankled bitterly in his breast nevertheless. Again and again that evening did he turn the conversation upon whom she had met in the course of the day; but though Cissy mentioned a good many people, she had no idea that he had witnessed her parting with her father, and said never a word on the subject—of course, it was not likely that she would. Had she known her husband had seen it, she would have been mightily

perplexed, and what she might or might not have said regarding it is dubious.

Women are invariably, from the instinct of their sex, more accomplished in falsehoods than men. There are many cases in which modesty compels them to conceal the truth. Things pass under their eyes in life, which it is incumbent upon them to pretend not to be aware of. Few of even the highest of them but must have had their ears shocked at times by language unfitted for their hearing, and they arrive at knowledge of which it would seem almost preposterous to suspect them. The lunatic asylums furnish melancholy instances of this—of girls brought up in all the purity of home, using speech in their madness which it is difficult to conceive they could have ever known. When a girl loves, her first impulse is to conceal it. How many have said a man nay from no other cause than this, though they have yielded willingly enough to further pressure. But that women lie with better

grace than men, is a fact attributable to their natural modesty which teaches them the necessity of in some measure practising that art.

Montague Gore is suffering fierce torments. To that terrible suspicion of having lavished his love upon a woman whose heart is of marble, has succeeded the dire misgiving that she loves another. He is cherishing the passion of jealousy—a plant that requires little forcing. Gore hugs it to his breast closely, and it grows apace. How was it his wife came by all those bank-notes? who is this man that she meets and never speaks of? Easy to see now why she remains all unmoved by his passionate devotion—the citadel is already occupied, Cissy's heart is no longer in her own keeping—she loves another—is perhaps already this man's mistress. No! he will not do her that wrong—surely she cannot be so fair and so false. He thinks of the proud pure face, and says it is not so. Yet when women

meet men unknown to their husband, what does it mean generally?

Again and again does he return insidiously to this point during the next few days. He is so miserable, that he thirsts for some explanation. If she would but allude to having met this man, he fancies all might perhaps be cleared up. But Cissy does nothing of the kind. She begins intuitively to feel that her husband has conceived suspicions of some sort concerning her, and resents them with no little indignation. It has never occurred to her what interpretation could be placed upon these secret interviews. That her father could be deemed her lover is such an utter absurdity, that it never entered her head. She does think that her husband might forbid her to see him, and then Cissy wonders sadly what is it that he has done to place himself without the pale of society.

Well it does not signify, he has been ever a kind, indulgent father to her, and give

him up she will not. She does not want this question to arise between her and Montague. She has conceived a very great regard and esteem for him. She is quite conscious of all his patient watchful attention. She knows how her tastes, how her comforts have been studied, and what she prizes far more, is the courteous deference to her opinion, the quiet way in which her husband consults her on all points. Even the perplexities of his business he talks over with her freely.

To a woman who, in her previous marriage, had been alternately petted and insulted, but had never been treated as a rational being with a mind that could comprehend anything higher than dress or pleasure, this was inexpressibly sweet. Cissy, too, had learnt much during these last few months. She had naturally excellent abilities, and had mixed of late with cultivated people, who though they worked, and worked hard, yet did not conceive that money-getting and

display were the sole objects of life. She had met men who, though they had a sufficient appreciation of the luxuries and comforts that wealth confers, yet held that turtle, venison, and rare wines, without "good talk," did not constitute a satisfactory dinner. Men who regarded a woman, whose claims to their admiration were based solely on her face and the perfection of her toilette, with no great reverence. They required something more. A pretty doll, however, exquisitely dressed, did not satisfy them. They required a woman with ideas and the power of expressing them, not a mere figure, all smiles, satin and simper.

At last Montague Gore determines that he will speak out. He will ask his wife who is this mysterious stranger. Anything would be better than the cruel fancies that haunt him now. To know her false would not be so bitter as to doubt. To mistrust the woman we love is torture. To have

knowledge of her guilt is the first step towards burying our love. Our pride is then thoroughly roused—that contempt for treachery inherent in our nature flames out. Even the felon looks down upon his friend who turns Queen's evidence. We despise the woman who betrays us—one cannot love where one scorns ; but one can understand looking back regretfully at the dream that has fled, when the coquetry was as yet but teasing in our eyes. The sighing forth, like Sophie Arnould,

"Oh, le bon temps! J'étais bien malheureuse."

Even that, perhaps, is better than our present desolation.

It is after dinner, Gore and his wife are in their bright, cheerful drawing-room. He pretending to look over some papers, she playing dreamily on the piano. Cissy is no great musician, but music has a strange effect upon her. You could almost swear to her mood if you heard her fingers running

over the instrument when alone. To-night she is apparently somewhat sad, to judge by the mournful melodies that fall from her fingers. At last she gently closes the piano, comes across to the fire-place, and leans listlessly on the mantel-piece.

"Cissy," says her husband, struggling hard to make his tones indifferent; "who was it you were speaking to the day before yesterday when I overtook you?"

It has come at last then. She knew it was impending. How shall she meet it? She hesitates for a moment, not that any idea of subterfuge has entered her head, but she wants to think what is best to say on the subject.

"He was an old friend, Montague, one of my very oldest, one who has been very kind to me in times gone bye. But I cannot tell you his name. He has implored me to keep his presence in this country a secret."

"If you met him by accident, I have no

more to say," replied her husband, in slow, measured tones; "but Paynter mentioned having seen you with an unknown individual, who was doubtless the same."

Cissy paused for a moment, then rearing her head defiantly, exclaimed,

"I met him by appointment upon both occasions!"

"Then I demand to know who it is you meet thus."

"I cannot tell you. I have promised to keep his secret. Montague, can you not trust me?"

"Yes! I do. But the world is uncharitable. A wife's fame should be in her husband's keeping. Cissy, give me your word you will not meet this man again, and I say no more."

He gazed at her anxiously. It was no unreasonable request. No more than he had both right and reason to demand, and yet such was his love for this woman that his heart stood still as he listened for her reply.

If she should refuse, then he felt there must open a gap between them he would never bridge.

"I will not," she said, proudly. "Have you so little faith in the woman you have made your wife as this? Does the love you have professed mean that she is to know nobody without your leave and license, that she is to drop old friends because you have never yet met them? Have you no belief in me, Montague?"

"Don't be absurd, Cissy," he replied, in somewhat husky tones. "I have no wish to control your movements, or supervise your acquaintance; but I may be allowed to object to your meeting a man clandestinely, of whose very name I am ignorant, without being deemed a very tyrannous husband either."

Still it never entered her head that he could think it possible that she was granting rendezvous to a lover. She only thought that he feared her being compromised in the

world's eyes, by owning to an acquaintance on whom that world looked askew, as her father had cordially owned it did on him to a certain extent. That her father could be deemed her lover, under any possible circumstances, would always be very slow to occur to a daughter's imagination. What she would have seen at a glance in any case than her own—what would have been transparent to a woman of the world, as Cissy was, under any other circumstances, she was utterly blind to now.

"You intend then to control my movements," she cried indignantly. "Am I to consider myself under surveillance—that my outgoings and in-comings are watched? Speak, Sir! is that your intention?"

Yes, it was as he had thought, this thing would breed bitter quarrel between them; but Montague Gore's face hardened, and his lips were drawn tight as he replied in a deep stern voice,

"You have no right to say that. It is a

sharp taunt to hurl at me. What I witnessed was by purest accident. What I heard Paynter say, you heard also. I would scorn to watch you in any way; I have no intention of doing so. I forbid you to see this man again. If it comes to my knowledge you have done so, I shall then take such steps as I deem necessary."

If he had said, "I ask you not to see this man again," instead of "I forbid," Cissy might have answered differently, but the spirit of defiance was roused in her now.

"I decline," she replied haughtily, "to pledge myself upon the subject. To watch a woman is to distrust her."

"I never watched you, and never will," he broke in passionately. "For God's sake go your own way! Don't blame me if I should refuse to bear with it."

She was touched by his evident emotion. She felt more tender towards him at this moment than she, perhaps, had ever done before, though she was trying him so hardly.

It is often so. Many a quarrel would have ended happily, if either could have seen midst the angry words the one second when the gleam of the old sunshine flashed through the storm clouds. But we never do. That soft answer that turneth away wrath is so seldom given.

We hurl back taunt for taunt, and gibe for gibe. Between those who love most are ever the most unappeasable quarrels. The sharp word, the stinging sarcasm comes doubly home from the lips of those we love, and then there is another version, the old story.

> "Alas! they had been friends in youth,
> But whispering tongues will poison truth."

Ah, well, we all know how our friends take good care such wounds are never healed again. How angry speech made in the first tumult of passion is faithfully reported to those ears it should never reach, and the abyss widens day by day, till it becomes unbridgeable in this life.

Cissy remained silent for some minutes, but there was a marvellous softening of her voice when she spoke.

"Montague," she said gently. "What is it you suspect? What is it you fear?"

"I suspect nothing," he returned, and knew that as he uttered the words he lied; "but I fear much."

"What?"

"The wreck of my life's happiness. You persist in your right to meet this—this adventurer, I'll call him."

"Yes. I must. Trust me, Montague. It is not my own secret, or you should know it this minute. It will be all cleared up ere very long. Can you not believe in me for a little?"

She came across to him as she said this, and leant over the arm of his chair caressingly. It was a great concession for Cissy to make, for, as we know, she was little addicted to such blandishments towards her

husband, but he was blind to everything but this fierce jealousy that possessed him.

"Say you will see him no more, and I will believe in you," he replied curtly.

"I cannot do that," she replied quickly, and turning abruptly from him.

"On your head be it, then," he rejoined roughly, "if my trust is shaken. You know how I have loved you. Suspicion is a canker that makes love die apace."

"You are right," she rejoined sharply, as she lit her candlestick. "To be suspected without just grounds is folly, I have heard in my old Paris days. You need not fear that of me, Montague; but the man who cannot trust his wife is stuffing his couch with thorns, believe me; good night," and she swept from the room with proud indignation.

You might have deemed she retired an outraged wife, had you seen that exit. Surely her husband had fair grounds for

remonstrance. But women will apparently put us in the wrong upon such occasions, do we our spiriting wisely and gently as we may.

As for Gore, he sat for some time with his head buried in his hands. He had raised a wall between him and his wife that would not be easy to pull down again. He felt they were wider apart now than ever, and yet if he had but responded to that overture on her part generously, he had been nearer winning her love than he had ever been yet. As it was, his thoughts shaped themselves somewhat in this wise.

> "If you loved me ever so little,
> I could bear the bonds that gall,
> I could dream the bonds were brittle;
> You do not love me at all."

CHAPTER XIII.

WHAT SHOULD YOU CALL RICH?

WHEN Bessie's engagement was formally announced, there was much flutter and agitation in Roseneath House. Aunt Clementina congratulated the girl heartily, but Miss Matilda took a different view. She asserted that military men were a class upon whom no reliance could be placed, that they were here to-day, and gone to-morrow. When Miss Clementina hinted that was the common lot of humanity, she rebuked her sharply,

"You know what I mean, Clem, so don't

pretend you do not. You know they never know where they may be this time twelvemonth. Poor Bessie may find herself on the borders of the Dead Sea, or in the deserts of Astracan before many months are over. Captain Detfield, of course, must go where duty, or glory, or whatever it is, calls him. He may be summoned to kill black people in Africa, or copper-coloured ones in Asia. In these times, apparently, civilization always requires that battles and sieges, and such things, should be taking place somewhere. Why couldn't she choose a clergyman? There's safety in that. But these soldiers, oh dear! they're always away, and 'find in each port a new wife,' as somebody says in a song, or a play, or something. I believe, certainly, that was said relative to the navy; but the army, I daresay, is no better."

Miss Matilda, in short, for two days made Roseneath House very uncomfortable. She told her sister that she ought to have seen

what in truth Miss Clementina had seen; that she ought to have prevented it; that she should have given her a hint of this some time ago, and she would have soon sent Captain Detfield about his business. In vain did Aunt Clem urge that the guardsman was a very nice match for Bessie. Miss Matilda set her face against soldiers. They were men of neither morals, piety, nor principles, their trade was murder. Why could not her niece have chosen a husband from a more peaceful profession? The Reverend Alexander Sadman, the evangelical light of Islington, had deigned to admire Bessie, and professed a desire to snatch her as a brand from the burning. But here Bessie retorted so fiercely, vowing that if there were not another man alive, nothing should induce her to bestow her hand upon that sanctimonious clergyman, that Aunt Matilda felt a little cowed.

At the expiration of the two days, she had arrived at resignation. Well they must

make the best of it. Thanks to Clementina's folly, and Bessie's obstinate infatuation, there was no more to be said. She hoped she had done her duty, she had warned her. But when Bessie had nestled up to her, with her own sweet smile, and whispered,

"Won't you do one thing more, Aunt Matilda, congratulate me."

The good lady fairly broke down, cried a little, and replied,

"Bless you, child, may you be happy, though he is a soldier."

"You've got over me, my dear," continued Miss Matilda, when her emotion had a little subsided, "the next question is, whether you can get over Mr. Roxby. Remember, Bessie, he, like myself, is your guardian, and rather a more important guardian than I am, you have always wheedled me into letting you have your own way, since you were a wee thing in short petticoats; but Mr. Roxby, my darling, is made of sterner stuff."

Quite prepared now is Miss Matilda, with all the inconsistency of her nature, to take her niece's part against Roxby, should it be necessary. Take it, too, with strong prejudice in favour of this lover she has so lately condemned, with an obstinacy and disregard of argument, known only to her sex.

"It was very clever of you, Charlie," said Miss Bessie, one afternoon, as they sat by themselves in the drawing-room, "to point out to Aunt Matilda that the army, besides fighting abroad, were the upholders of the Crown, Church, and order at home."

"Well you see, pet, it was necessary to disabuse Miss Stanbury of the idea that we were mere hired bravoes, whose mission it was to go on continual cut-throat expeditions into foreign lands. I don't think really we have much to do with upholding Church and State, and all that sort of thing. I only know that the fellows who talk sedition at the foot of the Nelson Column won't find

us fraternize as the soldiers do in Paris; as the old song says,

"'Ere the king's crown goes down there are crowns to be broke.'

The demagogues needn't imagine we shall not stand to our colours, if they ever venture to try the question. And our men follow their officers."

"Well, never mind that now. I want to talk to you about something much more serious."

"What a disloyal little girl it is," replied Detfield, laughing, "as if anything could be more serious than the safety of the Crown and our institutions."

"No, do be serious, Charlie! You have got to see Mr. Roxby, and you know he may say—"

"That you are much too good for me," interrupted Detfield. "He will be right, you are."

"Stop! do listen to me," cried the girl,

as she moved across to his side. "I have something to tell you."

"I am all ears, *ma mie*," replied her lover, as he passed his arm round her slender waist, and drew her closer to him.

"Well, you know, I am afraid he will object to our engagement."

"Let him, what does it matter? You have promised to wait, and I am afraid before I can claim you it will be past his power to object. You will have the right to dispose of yourself, without reference to Roxby."

"But, Charlie, suppose I have some money. I am so glad I have, for your sake."

"What do you mean?" inquired Detfield, curiously. He had no suspicion, as yet, that she was an heiress. That she might have some little of her own was, of course, possible.

"But I have a good deal of money, at

least, what I think a good deal of money. What should you think a good deal for your wife to bring you?" and as she spoke, she raised her head from his shoulder, and peered inquisitively into his face.

"I have never thought one atom about it, Bessie. I took you for yourself, sweet. If I had thought you were rich, I don't think I should have ever asked you to be my wife."

"Be quiet, Charlie," replied the girl, extricating herself a little from his close embrace. "I want to know what you would call rich for me?"

"You are rich enough in yourself, child. What makes you so vain of your small fortune?"

"But it isn't small," she replied, in quick earnest tones, "at least, I'm told not. What would you consider a big fortune to get with your wife?"

"What is it you mean? I don't understand you."

"Answer my question."

"Well, if you have three or four thousand pounds of your own, Bessie, it would be pretty pin money for you, child."

"But I've a great deal more than that," she cried, with sparkling eyes, and clapping her hands. "Your wife, Sir, will be a rich woman."

He had solved now the one thing she was so curious to know. She knew he had taken her for herself, but what she did wish to learn was what he would consider a fortune.

Detfield gazed at her in utter bewilderment, and his face of blank astonishment redoubled the girl's merriment.

"Listen, Charlie," she exclaimed at length, throwing her arms round his neck. "You thought we were going to be, oh, so poor. Well, we are not. I shan't have to clean the grates, and you won't have to addle your brains money-making either. I am the proud possessor, they tell me, of—Stop! guess—guess, I insist."

But he remained mute.

"Did you say ten thousand pounds? not near enough, Charlie. No, twenty won't do. I believe I have thirty to bring you, and, my darling, I give it you with all my heart," and the soft lips sought his, and the remainder of her speech was of that kind, which those who have loved can imagine, but those who narrate cannot describe.

Detfield was dumb-foundered. He had paid these Islington visits with most mercenary motives. He had paid strenuous court to Mammon, and all the while the purer love had eclipsed it. He had failed lamentably in his scheme, and yet it seemed that he had wooed and won Danaë, after all. It was impossible to look upon Bessie's sweet face and doubt the truth of her statement. He had broken into the brazen chamber unwittingly.

"Are you not glad, Charlie," she said, at length, "to find that we shall not be quite so poor as you thought?"

The troubled expression of his face frightened her, and still he sat mute, though holding her close in his arms.

"My darling, I am not quite sure," he replied slowly, at length. "What looked so easy just now, appears very different after your confession. I had no idea of this. It's God's truth I thought you were portionless. That you might have money some day, I deemed probable. But, Bessie, I wooed you for yourself, and never counted up such chances. Do you believe me?"

"Yes, entirely. I know it."

"Well, you see now, speaking to your guardian becomes a very different thing. I, a ruined spendthrift, am going to ask for the hand of a girl of fortune. When I thought you had next to nothing, it seemed simple. As it is, he has a right to object, and object strongly."

"Let him. What does it matter—the time must come when my money will be my own," cried the girl proudly. "I said I

would wait for you, and trust in you, Charlie. Do you think I am less likely to do it now, than when you thought me penniless?" and she gazed anxiously into his face.

"But, Bessie, they will tell you that you can do much better than marry me."

"That happens to be a question Bessie sooner or later must solve for herself. She tells you now that you have won her heart. If you love me, Charlie, you'll not blench because there may be difficulties in the way."

Detfield looked at her for a moment, but the proud passionate love that he read in her eyes would have made most men swear to win her, let the obstacles be what they might.

"God bless you, child!" he whispered, as he kissed her. "With a fortune, or without you're mine, are you not?"

"Yes, with a fortune, Charlie," she replied, smiling, and looking up into his face.

"Better so for both our sakes. But I am off now to confront this guardian of yours. He has been civil enough to me whenever I have met him, but present circumstances may change his tone. A chance acquaintance, and a candidate for the hand of his heiress ward are very different men."

"Hush! Charlie dear, no more about the heiress if you love me. You are going to ask my guardian's consent to our engagement, and, remember, I am as anxious as you to know what he says."

"Good-bye, sweet. I will send you a note this evening to tell you what may be the result of our interview."

Once more the lovers' lips met, and then Detfield tore himself away.

CHAPTER XIV.

MR. ROXBY AS A GUARDIAN.

MUCH too earnest in his love was Detfield, to dream of postponement of his interview with Roxby. We all know that *laissez aller* stage of fast life, when the main point is to put off the disagreeables as long as possible—when the facing of our difficulties is a thing to be deferred as long as feasible. We know it also when we have sobered down, and such things are supposed to be circumstances of the past. We withhold from the wife of our bosom the results of that last disastrous speculation. We delay,

yes, would fain always delay confiding to our friends the failures we have made—wonderfully reticent we are always about these failures. When our play, novel, or investment has turned out a perfect fiasco, how we do gloss it over, and demonstrate that it is malevolent fortune only that is the cause of our weeping and wailing. Does the man exist who will own to having written a bad story, a bad drama, or embarked in unsound speculation. No my brethren, critics, the public, the Stock Exchange, &c., know naught. It was the Fates were against us. What a blessing to think it was fate and no shortcomings on our own part. How comforting to reflect that we, at least, have nothing to reproach ourselves with.

Charlie Detfield, as he walks down to the City to see Mr. Roxby, ponders a good deal, as is natural, upon what he knows of this guardian of Bessie's. A pleasant, jovial, genial gentleman, in vast expanse of white waistcoat, with ties to match, more volu-

minous than suit the guardsman's idea of dress. But he is aware that breadth of necktie is associated with the consumption of turtle, and the manufacture of money. He tolerates these little eccentricities of evening toilette, as a part of the vocation to which Roxby is affiliated. Charlie reflects that he has seen country gentlemen of good repute and high esteem in their several counties, with similar proclivities regarding costume. But what he tries hard to recollect, is what he can of Roxby's manner. In short, what manner of man is Roxby.

A very difficult problem to solve that till you test it. Your genial friend over night turns out a very hard man to do business with next morning. Do you recollect that story of *the* Lord Mansfield, who, after passing a pleasant evening with Dr. Brocklesby, happened to have that illustrious physician brought before him as an evidence in some case the next morning. The Doctor nodded affably, as he entered the

witness-box, the judge took no notice; but when he came to sum up he alluded to him in this wise, "The next witness is one Brocklesby or Rocklesby, I am not sure which, and first he swears that he is a physician."

No, you can not quite arrive at the conclusion as to what a man is, if you have only met him over port-wine and walnuts. And this was about the extent of Detfield's knowledge of Roxby. But he was no whit the less determined on this account, in homely phrase, to have it out with that eminent financier. Still he did wish that he knew a little more about Roxby. He had indistinct visions of having, upon two or three occasions, treated that gentleman with supercilious indifference. What was Hecuba to him, or he to Hecuba? He had little thought then that Roxby might have a good deal to say to a most important step in his life. It is ever so, and a careless jest, or cynical remark often mars a man's career

more than he dreams of. That is why the stupid people who can't talk, so constantly beat their more brilliant compatriots in the race of life. To be a good listener is to forward your interests in this world. To be a good talker is a very dubious advantage.

At last Detfield arrives in Fenchurch Street, the place in which Roxby transacted his multifarious business; for he was a man of much speculation and enterprise, this guardian of Bessie's. He was always floating companies, or winding them up, taking shares or selling them, promoting financial undertakings to benefit his fellow-creatures, or picking the bones of such enterprises when they had proved to be founded on sandy foundations, as in good truth many of the schemes offered by Roxby and his friends to the credulous public turned out to be. Still Mr. Roxby was regarded on Change as a man who could take pretty fair care of himself, and if his Central African Railways or Nebruska Mining Company

had proved rather disastrous investments to shareholders, the City generally did not think Mr. Roxby personally had lost much money in those high-sounding speculations.

But to see this active gentleman in his hive was not quite so easy as Detfield had anticipated. He was asked to sit down and wait, while a clerk having politely handed him a portion of the *Times*, took his card in. The supplement of the *Times* did not amuse Detfield. It does not some people, though I am never clear that it is not the most entertaining part of that paper. But the other sheets were in the hands of two other gentlemen who were fidgetting on their chairs, and literally snorting with impatience for an interview with the great financier. At first Charlie watched his companions lazily, and with some little amusement; but gradually he arrived at that state of irritation which they had already attained.

At the expiration of half-an-hour, he sat down and wrote a note requesting to see Mr. Roxby on business of the utmost importance. Mr. Roxby sent down a line in reply, to say that he was up to his eyes already in business of that nature and likely to remain so, would Captain Detfield give him the pleasure of his company that day at dinner, seven sharp. Having signified assent, Charlie departed; but even this had a somewhat depressing effect upon him. He had promised to write that night to Bessie, and tell her what her guardian had said. This now was impossible.

Punctual to time did Detfield drive up to Roxby's house in Gordon Square, a quiet and well-appointed, bachelor's establishment. Here, at all events, he had not long to wait. He had been scarce five minutes in the drawing-room before his host appeared, and apologised laughingly for not seeing him in the City.

"But, my dear Detfield, there is business

and business, I always have my hands full, and unless I am much mistaken, yours can be discussed comfortably over our claret after dinner. East of Temple Bar, you see, time is money. Now when you have partaken of what my cook has been able to improvise for us at short notice, I shall be quite at your service—ready to listen and discuss. Come along."

Very little need to apologise for that dinner. It was as good as two men could well sit down to, and Roxby was much too experienced a tactician to dwell upon shortcomings which he knew did not exist.

"I pay my servants high," he replied, in answer to a complimentary remark of his guest's on the entertainment, as they sat over their wine, "and let them cheat me pretty much as they will, they know there's only one thing I won't submit to, shortcomings on any point. I take no excuse. If they are not equal to emergencies, they are not fit for my place. My

cook was telegraphed to five minutes after you sent up your assent to dine here. I should have expected her to find a decent dinner for half a score at such notice. Of course she can do better with more time, but in London, with *carte blanche*, if a woman can't improvise something decent in four hours she won't do for me."

"Well, I should say you are pretty fairly suited."

"Yes. All these things are a mere question of money. What you want is always in the market, if you can afford to pay for it. Pictures, china, moors in Scotland, country-house, anything you like. I'm a moderate man—I go in for comfort. This is not a big house, I don't want one; but it is furnished as luxuriously, to my tastes, as is possible. My one hobby is perfectly trained servants. I don't often keep them over three years, they begin to think then you can't do without them, as if there were not quite as good to be had as ever were

parted with. No, don't pass that claret, it's forty-eight, and you won't meet genuine forty-eight very often now a-days."

"But I have got something very important to discuss with you, Mr. Roxby," replied Charlie, as he filled his glass.

"Of course you have, my dear fellow," interposed his host, "but we'll have that presently, over a cigar and our coffee. Havn't you come down expressly to have a talk, the subject of which I can make a pretty good guess about. But never mind that yet, finish off the decanter, and we'll have another bottle. The wine's good enough to go on with a little longer."

Detfield winced at the familiarity of his host. Roxby had never addressed him in this easy fashion before, and Charlie had an intuitive feeling that it boded him no good. Most men would have heralded it as a propitious omen, but somehow he did not. The weather was rather *too fine*. Such very summery mornings often end in thunder-

storms, and this was just Detfield's sensation.

It certainly did not occur to the guardsman that his host was pressing him to drink, but it was so. Mr. Roxby had a somewhat awkward proposition to make, and he, from the depths of his experience, considered that these things were mellowed by wine—that they rather lost their grim deformity when viewed through a considerable amount of liquor. But Charlie was no neophyte, and it took a good deal of claret to affect him. Still we do know that what appears so easy in the smoking-room over night, often assumes a very different aspect the next morning — our difficulties of nine a.m. shrink as the night wears away. The creditors that have appalled a man over his tea and toast, are men of buckram after supper. But cigars and coffee appear at last, and Charlie goes at once to the subject.

"Of course, you have guessed, Mr.

Roxby, what it is I have to say to you."

His host nodded.

"I love your ward, and she has consented to be my wife, subject naturally to your consent."

Diplomatic this, upon Charlie's part. As arrangements stood between him and Bessie, it was to be with, if possible, without if not.

"Exactly," replied Roxby slowly, and ejecting a cloud of smoke from his lips, "but as her guardian, I must put a question or two to you before I give my consent. Of course, as far as position goes, &c., you're most eligible, but then, my dear Detfield, you see you're ruined."

"Well, I don't know how you know it, but I don't want to blink the fact," returned Charlie doggedly, "I am."

"My dear Sir," replied Roxby, as he flipped the ashes from his cigar. "We know all this kind of thing in the City."

"I told her so," continued the guardsman, not heeding the interruption, "and it's God's truth, when I asked her to be my wife I had no idea she was an heiress."

Mr. Roxby smiled; it was a smile of much incredulity. He did not believe this statement in the least. Had not his tool, Jenkens, sought out this ingenuous young man and introduced him to Bessie for the express purpose of repairing his shattered fortunes. "Well, if Captain Detfield wished to play the hypocrite to himself, all the better," thought Mr. Roxby. "When a man is a hypocrite, he is never shocked at a little piece of roguery. Clever fellow, Jenkens—cleverer than I have thought him lately. I was half-afraid he had made a mistake in his man."

So musing, Roxby rubbed his hands softly, and then replied,

"Well, now, my dear Detfield you have found out your mistake, I presume

you are fairly satisfied with the discovery."

"I am for her sake," rejoined Charlie earnestly, "though not for my own. It makes what I have to ask of you considerably more difficult. You've a right to object to a ruined man being engaged to your ward, who is rich; if she had been poor, it would have been different."

"Quite so," replied Roxby. He had no intention of making Detfield's explanation easy for him. It would hardly suit the terms he intended to propose, the bargain he meant to make. He was one of those unscrupulous men who make capital out of everything they do. He had become, by accident, guardian to a wealthy ward—she had arrived at a marriageable age. Mr. Roxby's intention was to sell her. If Detfield would not pay his price, somebody less nice on such points would. At present, he thought he should have little difficulty in driving his bargain. A ruined man who opened his case by pretending that he had

wooed Bessie in ignorance of her riches: "No need to be very scrupulous with him," thought Roxby. Of the real state of the affair it was of course impossible he could have a suspicion. Of the mistake Detfield had been led into regarding Miss Clementina, he had no conception. All he knew was that his agent, Jenkens, had introduced this man to his ward with a view to "marrying money." Detfield had wooed Bessie with his eyes open. What he might choose to say now was only the specious gloss men throw over a transaction, of which they are a little ashamed.

Roxby had considerable contempt for such weakness, and judged men's flaccidity of character rightly a good deal by such small traits. He had reason. If you intend to be a scoundrel, do not be that meanest of beings, a cowardly one. Though we detest, we respect Iago, we despise Macbeth.

Charlie had expected some assistance from his host, some sign of encouragement

to proceed at all events; but Mr. Roxby continued to smoke placidly, as if they were conversing upon the mere topics of the day. After a silence of some minutes, Detfield once more took up his speech.

"I suppose," he said, "you are thinking all this over. Answer me one thing. Will you give me Bessie?"

"That depends on the result of this conversation. A man who has succeeded in ruining himself in London life, and has got to your years, though they are not very many still you've passed the age of puppydom a good bit, should be a man of the world."

He paused here, but Charlie only nodded.

"Well," resumed Roxby, "you, a broken man, marry my ward with her thirty thousand pounds, she has that; pay off your debts, and settle down as a virtuous and sober member of the community. Not very bad business on your part, is it?"

"I wooed her for herself. I had no

idea she had money, I thought Miss Clementina was the heiress," interposed Charlie warmly.

"Devilish clever, by Jove!" thought Mr. Roxby. "I have seen a good many of 'em declare they had no idea the lady had a fortune, but this is a master stroke. This young man is really brilliant."

"Well," he continued, laughing, "you've at all events made a very comfortable mistake, Detfield, on your side of the ledger. Now, I'm going to talk to you as a man of the world. You'll make a good thing of this marriage. My consent *is* of consequence to you. Show me fair reasons for giving it."

"I don't understand you," replied Charlie, opening his eyes.

"Pooh—pooh! my dear fellow, yes, you do. I hate fencing. Let's come to the point. Five minutes will settle it, if you will speak plain."

"I shall have to understand you before I

can," replied Charlie, gravely, now most completely puzzled.

"Psha!" returned the other, impatiently, "what is the use of beating about the bush in this fashion. Give me good reasons for assenting to this marriage."

Still Charlie stared blankly at his interlocutor.

"What, you want it put still plainer!" continued Roxby, vehemently. "This match will be a good thing for you. What is it going to be worth to me?"

"I see," replied Detfield, after a short pause. "You mean, your consent must be purchased."

"Of course I do. Why couldn't you speak out at once? It isn't likely I am going to resign the good will of a valuable property for nothing. You're a cool hand, to do you justice. I suppose you wanted to draw me about the price."

"Perhaps so," replied the guardsman, drily.

"Well, I never hem and haw," resumed Roxby, in jubilant tones. "It's not my way of doing business. I buy, or I sell at a jump. I never haggle about price when I want a thing, and I don't stand beating down when I sell. Five thousand is my figure. It's not much more than fifteen per cent on what will fall to you."

"But I haven't got it," responded Charlie, with the greatest composure.

"Of course you haven't, but you will have, as soon as you are married to Bessie. I'll have a deed drawn up that will make that all right."

"Still, you see, this is her money, not mine," interposed Detfield, with a peculiar blandness, that might have warned a less excited man than his host that he was treading on dangerous ground.

But Roxby, ever of a sanguine disposition, warmed with the wine he had drank, and quite convinced in his own mind that Charlie was as unprincipled as himself, that

he had sought Bessie's love only for her money, and that all this affected ignorance was but mere clever fencing on his part, saw it not one whit.

"Bah!" he rejoined, laughing. "Leave that to me. I will stand your friend when the settlements are made out. You shall have no cause to complain that they are drawn too tightly. Now what do you say?"

"Say," replied Charlie, slowly, as he threw his cigar into the grate. "I say that you are, bar none, the d—dest blackguard it was ever my misfortune to dine with."

"Sir, do you mean to insult me?" cried Roxby, springing to his feet.

"I should fancy that next to impossible," returned Detfield, rising leisurely from his chair. "Don't bluster, it's only gratuitous noise, you know. Out and out scoundrels of your sort are never physically dangerous, and any attempt at personal violence will only recoil on your own head. Good night."

"You shall never marry Bessie Stanbury," cried Roxby, in a voice hoarse with passion.

"I think I shall. We shall see."

"You shall be rotting in a sponging-house before the week is over," screamed Roxby. "You, at all events, cannot afford to wait."

But Charlie vouchsafed no reply, and took his departure.

CHAPTER XV.

A KISS WITH A STING IN IT.

MONTAGUE GORE and his wife have drifted slowly apart since the conversation of a few evenings back. Cissy, conscious of her innocence, and in no wise comprehending how much jealousy has to do with her husband's remonstrance, feels indignant at the distrust of herself conveyed thereby. She knows there is nothing to find fault with much in these mysterious meetings. She cannot see from any point of view but her own. She simply deems Montague suspicious. Wanting in belief of the recti-

tude of the woman he has made his wife.

As for Gore, with him suspicion and jealousy have grown apace. He scorns to take any note of his wife's actions. Even when the post comes in, he glances no more at the letters than to see what may be for himself. "Mrs. Gore" is quite sufficient to prevent his looking further. He asks no questions now. He never demands, as he did in their early days, "Who's your correspondent, Cissy? Has he or she anything amusing to say?" Even when his eye catches Mrs. Paynter's well-known calligraphy, his tongue is silent.

Cissy is beginning to interpret this in a fashion all her own. She cannot believe that all this cold indifference is due entirely to their disagreement, (so she terms it to herself) of the other night. She also is gradually, though as yet somewhat mistily, weaving for herself a chemise of Nessus. She would have laughed had you told her so, but the

thread of jealousy is incorporated with this fanciful woof that she is spinning. She muses on their gradual estrangement. "Surely he did love me dearly once. How devoted he was during our continental trip; how keen always to hear what Lizzie had to say, how he enjoyed her fun and gossip. Now he never asks what may be in her letters. Is it this, that she was an old flame. She speaks of him as a very old friend; we do call our former loves by that name sometimes. Has the old passion once more reasserted itself and extinguished the new—has love for Lizzie killed his fancy for me. It must have been but a fancy that he had for me; yet, if it was so, how do men speak and look when they love? How should I know, I who never have had love to give to man. Why does he no longer care to see her letters? Can it be that he has letters of her's to read that I know nothing of. It may be. It is impossible to believe that because I decline to give up

occasionally seeing an old friend, who for reasons known to himself does not wish to face society, Montague should treat me so coldly. There must be something more than that." Thus argued Cissy, turning the whole thing over in her mind pretty constantly.

As may be easily conceived, under such circumstances, the estrangement between them widened day by day. Confidences were a thing of the past. Gore sought his house only just in time to dress for dinner. Such evenings as they past at home, he betook himself to his work, and left Cissy to her book—jealousy and distrust gathering on both sides. The husband suffering torture that he strove to lull to sleep, as in the old sorrow of many years back, by dint of hard work. The wife slowly awaking to a dull feeling of pain, that she felt unable to comprehend, but with a proud consciousness of unjust treatment.

It was not to be supposed that the discord

in the house could escape the sharp eyes of one so intimate with the Gore ménage as Mrs. Paynter. That lady speedily discovered that there was something wrong, and quickly did she resolve that she would know the rights of it. Flighty, volatile, she might be, but Lizzie Paynter was a very staunch friend to those she loved, and these were two people she had a great regard for. She did think, in her sanguine way, that if she could but get to the bottom of this misunderstanding, which, it was clear, existed between Cissy and her husband, that it was possible she might bring them together again.

"It will be difficult," mused Mrs. Paynter, shaking her pretty head sagaciously. "Interfering between husband and wife is a delicate operation, very. Cissy, too, is getting decidedly repellent in her manner towards me. But, my dear Cissy, I like you rather too well to stand that. I shall have it out some time when you don't quite expect

it. Montague, too, goes about moped and indifferent. Says he's overworked. No, Montie, that won't do for me. It's something a good deal more than overwork is the matter with you."

When Mrs. Paynter talked the subject over with her husband, she was rather astonished at the way he spoke concerning her scheme.

"Better not, Lizzie," he said. "I see as well as you do that things are working awry between Montie Gore and his wife. I've a wee suspicion about the cause. No, I'm not going to tell you what I fancy, child. I don't think I ever forbade you to do anything in my life."

"But you are going to now, John," interposed Mrs. Paynter, softly.

"No, I'm not. I've belief in your sharp little noddle, aud wouldn't go that far; but I think, Lizzie, you will interfere to no good now, and might step in to good purpose later."

"I disagree with you, John. I must try to clear up this difference between them, providing, after a little, I find I'm right in my suspicions."

"What are they?"

"Ah! you would like to know, would you? confidence for confidence, my husband."

John Paynter shook his head.

"What, you won't. Well, John, I think Montie is suffering from an attack of jealousy. Cissy, I can't make out—unless it is she is indignant at being unjustly suspected."

"Look here, Lizzie; I believe in your friend, but I fancy Montague Gore has some reason in his wrath. If, as I tell you, Cissy is what I think her, it will come right without your putting your little nose into the business."

"It isn't so very small," exclaimed Mrs. Paynter, passing her delicate fingers reflectively over the organ in question.

"It's just the right size, and very pretty to boot, you vain woman," retorted her husband, laughing.

"You dear old John! that's a very sweet speech for you; but I've made up my mind."

"To interfere?"

"Of course."

"Well, Lizzie, I hope you will be successful, but I own I doubt it."

"Your wife, Sir," she rejoined, laughing, and sweeping him a mock curtsey, "is a very clever woman, although you have never quite recognised the fact."

"I only know," said her husband, smiling, "that she always takes her own way, and usually says it is my fault when it proves a failure. I'm off to smoke," he continued, rising.

"No; smoke here," returned Lizzie.

"Not a bit of it, my dear. You want to discuss the Gore's case all night, and I've said my say."

"You ungracious old monster! Go and commit tobacco in your own den, then," but the *riant* look that accompanied the speech, showed that Lizzie and her husband understood each other much better than a short-sighted world usually gave them credit for.

Having made up her mind to interfere, the next question that presented itself to Mrs. Paynter, was on which side it would be most judicious to commence her attack. Woman-like, she thought she could do more with a man than with one of her own sex. Besides, Mrs. Gore had been somewhat cold towards her of late, and Lizzie wondered at times what was the meaning of that.

"She's piqued about something," argued that lady, "though what it is I confess I don't understand. To see Montague alone in Park Crescent will be difficult, what if I invade him in his chambers. A bold measure certainly, but then I rather like bold measures. It's my one chance pretty

well of seeing him alone. I might ask him to come here and see me it's true; but no, I like the other best, there's more fun in it. How it will shock one or two dear friends of mine, if they should happen to hear of it," and Lizzie gave way to a little laugh at the idea.

Montague Gore, as we know, had chambers in the Temple, they consisted of three rooms opening into one another. In the days they had been residential, the outer of these had been his business-room, the next his sitting-room, the inner his bed-room. Since his marriage, the outer room had been given up to his clerk, while the sitting-room had been turned into a waiting-room for clients, communicating with the inner room of all by a door, the upper half of which was of glazed glass—glaze in some few places worn away so that it was possible to look into the inner room, if a person were so minded. Gore had given orders once or twice that this glass should be freshly glazed,

but so far it had not been attended to. A sultry afternoon, Mr. Kinglake tells us, occasioned in some measure the invasion of the Crimea; it had been better for Montague Gore if he had never exchanged the old door for this glass arrangement.

Great was his astonishment, when one afternoon his clerk brought in Mrs. Paynter's card, and intimated that the lady wished to see him.

Of course he welcomed her cordially, at the same time expressing a hope that nothing unpleasant had procured him the honour of this visit.

"Well, I don't know," replied Lizzie; "we shall see when we look into things. So this is the hole in which you make all your money; like John's, it would be considerably improved by the inroad of a housemaid with a lot of soap and water."

"Heaven forefend! we should never be able to find anything again."

Mrs. Paynter, meanwhile, was quietly

noting the aspect of the place. Owing to Gore having lived there previous to his marriage, it contained more furniture than is usual in chambers not residential. Especially did Mrs. Paynter's eye linger on the picture over the writing-table, of which we have before heard. She wondered who it might be, but she remembered, though rather indistinctly, that there was a tragedy connected with Gore's life, and forebore to inquire.

"I don't think much of your den, Mr. Gore, and that's the truth!" she exclaimed, after a little, "but I suppose you smarten it up a bit when Cissy comes to lunch with you."

"She never does," replied Gore, curtly. "Wives rarely invade their husband's place of business, I should think."

"Oh, yes! I do now and then for one. But I wanted to see you upon something of importance—important to me as to all your friends—still more important to you. Can you guess what it is?"

He shook his head, and looked blankly into her face. She eyed him keenly for a moment, then exclaimed, abruptly,

"What is wrong between you and Cissy?"

He started. What! it was common talk then among their friends that he and his wife did not get on together. He paused a few seconds, and then replied,

"Nothing. What can you mean?"

"That's not the truth, Montague, there is;" replied Mrs. Paynter, quietly.

"If Cissy has made you the confidante of her grievances," he rejoined, sharply; "you know more than I do."

It stirred him to anger to think that his wife should confide in this woman—she who would not confide in him. To his jealous temper this was intolerable. Mrs. Paynter was evidently here as his wife's ambassadress.

"Montague, don't mistake me so cruelly! Cissy never opened her lips to me on the

subject ; but to one who knows you both so well as I do, it requires little sharp-sightedness to see there is something amiss."

"I suppose," he returned, roughly, "there's a seamy side to most married life. It was not likely I should be more fortunate than my neighbours. I daresay you and John Paynter have found the springs of the domestic chariot get a little out of order upon occasion."

"John and I understand one another," replied Lizzie.

"I should like to hear what he says about it!" exclaimed Gore, rudely.

"He's more courteous to a lady than you, at all events ;" cried Mrs. Paynter, springing to her feet. "I came to help you, if I could. You meet me with distrust, and are down right bearish besides. I will go."

She looked very handsome in her wrath, as she stood there, her head thrown slightly

back, and her blue eyes sparkling with indignation. She was very angry with this man. He had refused to flirt with her in days gone by, and a woman never quite forgets that; now he was refusing the loyal friendship and help that she proffered. She turned, and walked swiftly to the door; but ere she reached it, he overtook her, caught her hand and exclaimed,

"Forgive me, Lizzie! we cannot part like this. Pardon a man who has good reason to feel somewhat embittered. Come back, and sit down."

He had never called her by her Christian name before. In his excitement, he was scarce conscious that he had done so now. It was odd, but that slight incident roused the ever-ready spirit of coquetry within Lizzie's breast. She turned round upon him, and as the anger died out of her face, said softly,

"I thought, Montie, you could never

really mean to treat an old ally like that."

He was somewhat taken aback by this abrupt transition from indignation to tenderness. Still he was as yet too much intent upon learning what she might have to say to pay much attention to it.

If Montague Gore was anxious to hear Mrs. Paynter's revelation, there was one just arrived at the other side of that glazed door who stood petrified at the sound of her voice.

Cissy had been about to knock at it, when Mrs. Paynter's angry tones fell upon her ears. She could not catch the words in the least, but she felt sure it was a woman's voice. She thought she recognised it. Cissy paused.

By one of those caprices, which we of the West call chance, and the Easterns fate, a business telegram had arrived for Montague Gore just as Cissy was stepping into her brougham. She determined to take it

to him herself. On arriving at the outer door of her husband's chambers she found it ajar. No response being made to her knock, she pushed it gently open ; the room was empty, the clerk having slipt out on some temporary business of his own or his master's. Similarly she made her way into the next room, and was about to tap at the glass door, when her hand was arrested, as above described.

"You are making three great mistakes, Montie," said Mrs. Paynter smiling, as she resumed her seat. "First, you won't believe in my friendship, and you ought, you know. Secondly, you should always believe in a woman's help, if ever you get into a scrape with another woman. Men don't, I know, they always will consult one another, and what a mess they do make of it as a rule," and here Mrs. Paynter gave a most expressive shrug of her pretty shoulders.

"But I have repented of those two here-

sies," said Gore earnestly, "I accept your friendship, and will listen to your advice. Still, I am utterly ignorant of what it is you would talk to me about."

"And they call us hypocrites," observed Mrs. Paynter parenthetically. "You know very well. Will you answer my question? What is wrong between you and Cissy?"

"I don't know—nothing—something—everything. God help me! I cannot understand her."

"You should have let some of us teach you the windings of a woman's mind earlier," replied Mrs. Paynter archly, and favouring her companion with a most coquettish flash of her blue eyes. Though honestly working in Cissy's behalf, she could not resist the temptation of flirting a little bit on her own. "And now I am going to tell you your third mistake—you don't believe in your wife."

"I do!" cried Gore vehemently.

"No, you don't. You're jealous of her," replied Lizzie demurely.

"Jealous of whom, pray?"

"How should I know. Jealous without cause, I can swear. Your wife loves you very dearly."

"You think so?" inquired Gore, looking straight into his companion's eyes.

"I'm sure of it; better than she loves anyone in the world."

Montague Gore paused, and remained for some few seconds lost in thought.

What was Cissy doing all this time on the other side of that glazed door. Her conduct perhaps is hardly to be defended, but bear in mind her husband's change of manner had troubled her much of late. Who was this lady, she wondered, with whom he was closeted, the faint tones of whose voice, when raised, had seemed familiar to her ear? Suddenly she espied a place a little above her head from which the glaze had been a little worn off. She

seized a chair, and in another second she was looking into the room, and had recognized Lizzie Paynter.

"You honestly believe this?" said Gore, rising, at length. "I doubt it."

"You're mad, Montague, I swear it. Women don't often make a mistake about such things," and as she spoke she rose and laid her hand upon his arm.

"Bless you for the assurance any way, even if it should turn out you are mistaken. How can I ever repay your kindness?" he continued, taking her hands in his.

Not a gesture of all this was lost upon Cissy. She could not hear what they said, but she had an excellent view of the speakers.

The very devilry of coquetry possessed Lizzie at that instant.

"Pay me," she cried laughing. "Yes, that is new. You lawyers always exact a fee; I shall take one," and as she spoke she leant forward towards him, and her eyes

looking up into his said plainly what that fee should be.

Montague Gore bent his head and laid his lips lightly on her cheek, and a thrill of gratified vanity ran through Lizzie's veins. It was a poor and unfairly won triumph, but she had made this man succumb to her at last in some sort.

Cissy saw it all. She sprang from her chair, and sped with light foot and aching heart to her carriage. She knew now what it was to love. She knew at last that she loved her husband.

END OF THE SECOND VOLUME.

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